



Somerset
Council

Somerset Local Plan

Topic Paper: Spatial Strategy
(Scoping Consultation version)

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Prepared by	Graeme Thompson MRTPI BA(Hons), Principal Planning Policy Officer	21/05/2026
Senior Officer Approval	Kate Murdoch, MA MRTPI, Service Manager Strategic Policy & Implementation	21/05/2026
Lead Member Approval	Cllr Mike Rigby, Lead Member for Economic Development Planning and Assets	10/06/2026

Disclaimer

Please note that this paper documents the process to date and is subject to change. The paper will be reviewed and updated at numerous points along the way as the Local Plan progresses through its development, both in response to consultation comments, availability and analysis of data and information, updated national and local contexts and otherwise. It will be finalised at the point of submission of the Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination.

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Executive Summary

The spatial strategy for the Local Plan refers to the overall strategy for the pattern, scale and distribution of development across the plan area. It provides and communicates a spatial interpretation of the plan vision and can play an integral role in co-ordinating development and infrastructure delivery.

Policy context

The consultation draft NPPF (2025)¹ sets out that the planning system should contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, by managing the use and development of land in the long-term public interest. Achieving this requires a balanced approach which responds to three mutually dependent objectives (economic, social, environmental). Development plans should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area. Directing growth to the most appropriate and sustainable locations is a key objective of the plan-making process, and the spatial strategy is the lynchpin for doing so, planning positively for future growth and change by promoting a sustainable pattern of growth and setting clear expectations for the location of development.

In time, a new Spatial Development Strategy will be developed for the Wessex area (covering Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole).² This may further influence spatial strategy for the Local Plan in due course, but is most likely to be focused on identifying broad locations for strategic development such as new settlements, major urban extensions, and major cross-boundary development locations.

Existing, adopted plans covering Somerset³ are each built around a spatial strategy. Each plan has a different strategy reflecting the specific circumstances of each former Local Planning Authority area, when the plans were developed. There is no guarantee that the existing spatial strategies would be chosen now, but the existing plan spatial strategies are an important starting point for consideration.

Local Plan Vision and Outcomes

The emerging Local Plan Vision highlights some key considerations for developing spatial strategy options:

- Ambitious growth in key settlements must be balanced with ensuring compact urban forms and climate resilience.

¹ MHCLG (2025), Consultation Draft NPPF (2025), available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-proposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>

² MHCLG (2026) Open consultation: Areas for producing spatial development strategies, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/areas-for-producing-spatial-development-strategies/areas-for-producing-spatial-development-strategies>

³ See Adopted Local Plans at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/adopted-local-plans/>

- Historic settlement patterns are an important part of Somerset’s identity and should remain so into the future.
- Sustainable transport and infrastructure connectivity (physical and digital) must be the backbone for where new growth is accommodated, and for achieving greater inward investment and local innovation within the economy.
- Landscape, nature and the agricultural economy are key defining features of Somerset, which should be respected.
- Creating places that enable people to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives in beautiful and distinctive places is key to a successful sustainable development strategy.

The emerging Local Plan Outcomes draw out aspects of the Vision which should inform spatial strategy optioneering and can assist in determining whether they are reasonable alternatives to consider further.

Early engagement work⁴ suggests that the plan’s approach should focus around: brownfield first; proximity to employment; being infrastructure-led; reviving villages; and considering new communities. It should avoid planning for homes in areas of flood risk, smaller villages, national landscapes and on high quality farmland.

Linkages to other Local Plan themes

The spatial strategy has links with all other Local Plan themes. It is the spatial interpretation of the vision and objectives, and represents the overall strategy for accommodating housing and employment requirements, cognisant of constraints and opportunities, impacts and benefits of different settlement and growth patterns, and how likely development might be to achieve plan objectives and policy requirements on developable sites.

Determining the preferred spatial strategy is an iterative process. It moves from initial optioneering, to high level and then progressively more detailed assessment.

Climate change; flood risk; coastal change; protected landscapes; employment; infrastructure and services; transport and connectivity; and the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment processes are core local plan themes identified as being of key relevance to development of spatial strategy options.

Identifying the issues and developing the options

The issues identified through national context, Somerset context, data analysis, early engagement, Duty to Co-operate discussions and evidence base are:

- Settlement role and function
- Past delivery
- Urban capacity

⁴ Allies & Morrison on behalf of Somerset Council (2025), Somerset Local Plan Early Engagement Report, available at https://somersetcc.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/SCCPublic/EQCfitNBmdxDs_ybwi7_SvEBH6bYi5Ma4epVLuoP_E_ltvq?e=qS4k6X

- Employment
- Infrastructure capacity
- Settlement revival
- New communities
- Climate change, flood risk and coastal change
- Protected landscapes
- Transport and connectivity
- Ecological sensitivity
- Opportunities
- Call for Sites
- Duty to Co-operate / cross-boundary

Whilst 'health and wellbeing' is not explicitly mentioned within the above list, it has been identified as a cross-cutting theme for development of the Plan in recognition that there are many factors and issues (including those above) influencing health and wellbeing outcomes.

Analysis of these issues helped to establish an initial long-list of spatial strategy options for initial consideration, as well as determine how they might be spatially defined, and potentially iterate further in due course. The initial long-list of options developed was as follows:

Group 1: Urban Focus Roll-Forward

- 1a: Aggregated roll-forward of existing strategies.
- 1b: Combined roll-forward of existing strategies by settlement.
- 1c–1e: Roll-forward of individual district strategies (TDBC, SSSC, SDC).

Group 2: % Growth by Settlement

- 2a: Flat 10% growth
- 2b: Flat 32% growth.
- 2c: Tiered growth (45% Tier 1, 35% Tier 2, 25% Tier 3, 15% Tier 4, 5% Tier 5)

Group 3: Rural Dispersal

- 3a–3c: Increasing levels of growth in rural areas (up to 80%).

Group 4: Topic-Based

- 4a: Outside Nutrient Neutrality catchments.
- 4b: Climate resilience.
- 4c: Public transport corridor focus.
- 4d: Job opportunity focus.

Group 5: New Settlements

- 5a: 10% growth in new settlements.

- 5b: New settlements along PT corridors.

Group 6: Other

- 6: Real-world delivery roll-forward.
- 7: Brownfield-only approach.

Narrowing down the options

Internal engagement and strategic alignment took place during the latter part of 2025 through a series of officer workshops, an all-member briefing and Local Plan Steering Group meeting. These helped to shape and appraise the options, ensuring that options were considered and informed by points raised. Some options were considered unrealistic or to have unacceptable implications. The Public Transport Corridors (4c) and Job Opportunity Focus (4d) options were particularly referenced as being of interest and worth exploring further, being likely to play an important role in any preferred spatial strategy.

All long-list options were subject to review against the emerging Local Plan Outcomes as a way of determining whether or not they were likely to constitute ‘reasonable alternatives’ to be tested through Sustainability Appraisal (see **Appendix 1**). As a result of this process, the core options to be taken forward, iterated and assessed as part of Sustainability Appraisal (SA) are as follows:

Option 1b	Combined Roll Forward by Settlement This seeks to reflect a roll forward of each area's existing plan spatial strategies, applied to the new plan period.
Option 2c	Tiered % Growth This seeks to reflect a proportional increase of dwellings in a settlement depending on its scale.
Option 4b	Climate Resilience This seeks to avoid significant growth in areas at greatest risk of impacts from climate change, including flood risk and coastal change.
Option 4c	Public Transport Corridors This seeks to maximise opportunities of locating growth in places with better access to public transport.
Option 4d	Job Opportunity Focus This seeks to maximise opportunities of locating growth close to higher density clusters of jobs.
Option 6	Real World Delivery This seeks to reflect actual delivery patterns and market behaviour. It is a relatively rurally dispersed strategy.

Additional potential options not yet fully definable:

Option 5a/b	<p>New Settlements</p> <p>Would involve consideration of the role of one or more new settlements, likely in combination with one of the above core options. Whether new settlements will be needed or not is not yet known. In addition to this, it should be recognised that due to the timescales involved in bringing new settlements forward, it is likely that they would generally only contribute limited delivery within the plan period. If it is considered necessary or preferable to consider new settlements longer-term, then the plan will likely need to establish selection criteria and areas of search at least.</p>
Option 8	<p>Promoted sites</p> <p>Would involve consideration of sites promoted via the Call for Sites process and emerging as ‘potentially suitable’ or ‘potentially unsuitable’ within the initial HELAA report.</p>
Option 9	<p>Blended strategy</p> <p>The preferred strategy will almost certainly be a blend of the above options, maximising the benefits and minimising the disbenefits of each.</p>

The Core options can be defined spatially in relation to each settlement within the new Somerset settlement hierarchy. Subsequently, the overall housing requirement for Somerset can be attributed to each settlement by way of a percentage of overall growth, though this is indicative and intended as a guide only. **Appendix 2** sets out this indicative per settlement requirement in each of the six core option scenarios.

Appendix 3 contains maps of each of the 6 core options to provide an indicative visualisation of these options.

Some, limited external engagement has begun on spatial strategy options. However, this has been confined to specific targeted engagement where it served a wider purpose.

A separate SA Technical Paper⁵ has been produced to undertake an initial high level assessment of how each of the spatial strategy options as listed above performs against the SA Framework. This Technical Paper will be updated and revised in response to consultation feedback and document further work on iterating options and assessing their performance, and will in time be absorbed into the Draft SA Environmental Report anticipated to be published in support of the Draft Plan consultation on proposed content currently anticipated to be published in 2027.

⁵ Urban Edge Environmental Consulting Ltd on behalf of Somerset Council (2026 Initial Spatial Options Assessment Technical Note, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/evidence-base/>)

The Habitat Regulations Screening and Scoping Report⁶ published alongside the Local Plan Scoping Consultation was undertaken in autumn 2025. As part of this, it provides an initial high level screening assessment and comparison of the six core spatial strategy options as they were defined at the time, in terms of their potential for adverse effects upon European sites. The report confirms that in all cases there are likely significant effects to be assessed.

Next steps – the preferred policy option

The Council is now seeking comment on the emerging spatial strategy options as part of its Local Plan Scoping Consultation. Comments received, alongside further work to iterate options and inputs from SA and HRA processes will help to determine a working preferred spatial strategy.

Once this working preferred spatial strategy has been determined, this will be used to help identify potential site options drawing from those emerging from the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)⁷ and otherwise. The working preferred spatial strategy may then further iterate in response to site assessments and further optioneering, before a proposed spatial strategy is landed on for inclusion in the Draft Local Plan consultation in 2027.

This topic paper will be updated to support the Draft Local Plan consultation in 2027 in due course – further documenting processes and considerations up to that point.

⁶ Lepus Consulting Ltd on behalf of Somerset Council (2025), Habitat Regulations Assessment of the Somerset Local Plan: Screening & Scoping Report, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/evidence-base/>

⁷ Somerset Council (2026) Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), available at <https://placemaker.somerset.urbanintelligence.co.uk/p/document/4>

1. Scope of the topic paper

This topic paper covers the process of establishing spatial strategy options and determining the preferred spatial strategy for the Somerset Local Plan 2045. It provides the policy context and relationship with the Plan’s Vision and Objectives as well as other Local Plan themes and the key issues of relevance. It then goes on to set out the spatial strategy options considered and explain the story behind how these options were arrived at, iterated and assessed, before presenting the preferred spatial strategy included within the Draft Plan.

This topic paper provides a summary of the justification for the preferred spatial strategy, but should be read in conjunction with the Sustainability Appraisal, which is the critical process running alongside development of the Local Plan assessing the extent to which the emerging plan, when judged against reasonable alternatives, will help to achieve relevant environmental, economic and social objectives.

Whilst the paper refers to and draws upon other evidence and parts of the plan-making process (e.g. housing, economic development and employment, site selection, climate change and energy etc.) it does not in itself deal with these topics in detail. For more information about these and other referenced themes, please see the appropriate topic paper.

What do we mean by ‘spatial strategy’?

The spatial strategy for the Local Plan refers to the overall strategy for the pattern, scale and distribution of development across the plan area. It provides and communicates a spatial interpretation of the plan vision and can play an integral role in co-ordinating development and infrastructure delivery.

It is effectively a combination of the settlement hierarchy (informed by the Settlement Role and Function Study) and the scale and distribution of housing and employment growth (informed by settlement hierarchy, constraints and opportunities and site options).

The term ‘settlement hierarchy’ is used to refer to the relative role and function that different settlements (city, towns, villages, hamlets) play within Somerset. The Settlement Role and Function Study provides an evidence-based review of settlements within Somerset and proposes a settlement hierarchy organised around four ‘tiers’ (levels) and settlements considered to be within the open countryside.

2. Policy context relating to spatial strategy

National and sub-regional plans, programmes and guidance

[NPPF \(Consultation Draft, December 2025\)⁸](#)

⁸ MHCLG (2025), Consultation Draft NPPF (2025), available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-proposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied. In December 2025, the Government published a new consultation draft of the NPPF which proposes radical updates to the Framework. This clearly identifies national policy requirements for plan-making and decision-making separately. The plan-making policies must be read as a whole, and taken into account in preparing any part of the development plan. Each chapter of the updated Framework contains relevant objectives, but these should not be applied as policy themselves.

This section of the topic paper considers the elements of the NPPF most relevant to spatial strategy development. The NPPF sets out policies relating to a wide range of issues which may present constraints and opportunities for different patterns of distribution and development more generally depending upon site location, scale and likelihood of mitigation. These are not summarised here, but they will still be of particular importance when identifying spatial strategy options and determining the preferred spatial strategy for the plan.

Paragraphs 14 to 17 – Set out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, by managing the use and development of land in the long-term public interest. This means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, with a particular reference across to UN Sustainable Development Goals. The planning system has three mutually dependent objectives (economic, social, environmental). **Achieving sustainable development** requires a balanced approach which responds to all three objectives in mutually supporting ways. Development plans should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.

Plan-making objective – Chapter 2 sets out the national plan-making policies. It explicitly states that the preparation of development plans allows people to influence development in their area, including **directing growth to the most appropriate and sustainable locations**, supporting regeneration and conserving and enhancing the quality of the built and natural environment.

PM1 – Spatial development strategies – Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) are a new tier of strategic sub-regional scale plans designed to set a positive vision for future growth and change. The geography for any SDS covering Somerset is not yet determined. However, it looks likely to cover Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. Policy PM1 sets out that an SDS should (amongst other things):

- Set out a strategy for sustainable growth for at least a 20 year period, including through apportionment of objectively assessed housing need across constituent LPAs.
- Identify broad locations for strategic development including new settlements, major urban extensions, major cross-boundary development and key locations with potential for new homes and jobs.

- Provide a spatial framework for strategic investments and give spatial expression to strategic elements of Local Growth Plans and National Industrial Strategy.

As such, in time, **any SDS covering Somerset will have some influence upon spatial strategy** for development across the Somerset Local Plan plan-period.

S1 – Positive plan-making – states that plans should **plan positively for future growth and change** by promoting a **sustainable pattern of growth** and seeking to **mitigate climate change and adapt to its effects**, and fundamentally seeking to **meet the development needs of their area** by providing for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses (including supporting infrastructure), as well as needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas. This is the case unless the presence of areas or assets of particular importance⁹ provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development, or the adverse impacts of doing so would substantially outweigh the benefits of doing so.

S2 – Producing a spatial strategy – states that plans should set out a spatial strategy setting **clear expectations for the location of development** and where land should be protected or enhanced for specific purposes. It should do so by identifying (at the appropriate scale):

- Settlements (whether existing or proposed) and their boundaries (or clear criteria for identifying their extents);
- Location and boundary of town centres within settlements;
- Land that is protected or is proposed to be enhanced for specific purposes (e.g. habitat improvement) and which places limits on acceptability of development proposals; and
- Sites allocated for development to meet identified need for housing and other uses, local and strategic infrastructure (with a particular reference to enabling development of land around stations).

It explains that this should be illustrated on a key diagram with boundaries identified on a policies map.

CC1 – Planning for climate change – states that plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating climate change and supporting the transition to net zero in line with the objectives and provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008 (which as amended sets a legally binding national target of net zero by 2050). Plans should also take a proactive approach to adapting to climate change, including in relation to overheating, wildfires, drought, flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes. It explicitly states that plans should do this by proposing development patterns in spatial strategies which:

- Can help **contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions** (potentially informed by assessment of baseline carbon emissions and

⁹ Habitats sites and/or Sites of Special Scientific Interest; Green Belt; Local Green Space; National Landscapes; National Parks; Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets; and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.

potential effect of development options on future emissions and their mitigation); and

- **Avoid increased vulnerability and improve resilience to effects of climate change.**

HO4 – Land for large scale residential and mixed-use development – states that plans should identify suitable locations for large scale development, such as new settlements, new urban quarters or significant extensions to existing settlements. It explains that these locations should:

- Be capable of being supported by necessary **infrastructure and facilities**, with an explicit reference across to TR1 (**vision-led approach to planning for transport**) and TR3 (locating development in sustainable locations), and taking advantage of any **opportunities** presented by existing or planned infrastructure investment;
- Support sustainable communities with **sufficient access to services and employment** opportunities within the site (where realistic) or in larger towns with good access by **sustainable transport modes**; and
- Address strategic environmental opportunities and safeguards inc those set out in LNRS.

HO6 – Planning for a diverse mix of sites – states that plans should allocate land to accommodate at least 10% of housing requirements on small sites and 10% on medium sites, and allocate sites which **will support and enhance the vitality of rural communities** and enable villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services.

E1 – Providing the conditions for long term economic growth – states that plans should set out a clear economic vision and strategy, which takes a **positive, proactive and realistic approach to encouraging sustainable economic growth** in both urban and rural areas. This should consider the UK Modern Industrial Strategy, strategic and local economic development strategies, location of Industrial Strategy Zones and AI Growth Zones. They should seek to address potential barriers to investment including around infrastructure, services, housing, and poor environment. They should allocate sites to implement this vision and strategy with a particular attention to **facilitating the needs of a modern economy**.

L1 – Planning for an effective use of land – states that plans should identify ways of accommodating **as much as possible of the development required on previously developed land** through allocations, design guides and codes and increasing densities.

TR1 – Vision-led approach to planning for transport – states that **sustainable transport** should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making, being reflected in the plan vision and proposals, and forming an **integral part of the plan’s strategy**. This should be done by (amongst other things):

- Making sustainable transport considerations part of early engagement so that proposals reflect local views, evidence on accessibility, capacity and services,

and take account of **opportunities for prioritising and maximising sustainable movement across the area**. Plans should align with Local Transport Plans (LTPs), Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) and Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs) and investment in transport.

- Locating development where it can **support sustainable patterns of movement and make effective use of existing or proposed transport infrastructure**. Use the DfT Connectivity Tool to inform the assessment and selection of sites alongside other relevant evidence.

HC1 – Planning for healthy communities – states that plans should promote the creation of healthy and inclusive places by (amongst other things) identifying wider opportunities to promote good health, prevent ill-health and support social interaction through their spatial strategy and allocations, including through policies to strengthen town centres, locate development where it will support walking and cycling, and promote mixed-use developments.

F2 – Planning for effective flood risk management – states that plans should take a **risk-based approach** when identifying suitable locations for development, taking into account all sources of flood risk and the current and future impacts of climate change. This should be done by:

- **Applying the sequential test** (which steers new development first to areas with lowest risk of flooding from any source) **and where appropriate the exception test** (which sets criteria for development satisfying the sequential test but within flood zones 2, 3a or 3b);
- Safeguarding land for current or future flood management;
- Using opportunities provided by new development to reduce causes and impacts of flooding; and
- Where climate change is expected to increase flood risk for existing development so as to make it unsustainable long-term, seeking opportunities to relocate that development to more suitable locations.

F3 – Managing coastal change – states that plans should take into account Shoreline Management Plans, National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping, the UK Marine Policy Statement and relevant marine plans in assessing risks arising from coastal change and approaches to coastal management. Explicitly, **inappropriate development in vulnerable coastal areas should be avoided so that risks arising from coastal change are not exacerbated**.

N1 – Identifying environmental opportunities and safeguards – states that plans should safeguard and enhance the natural environment and reflect wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services to (amongst other things) steer the location of development in ways which **utilise land of least environmental value** where that would be consistent with other policies in the Framework. This includes **limiting the scale and extent of development within protected landscapes, avoiding use of higher quality agricultural land** where land of poorer quality is

available, and **avoiding and minimising harm to designated sites of importance for nature**.

National Planning Practice Guidance

The National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides complementary guidance to be considered alongside the NPPF. It has not been updated to reflect the consultation draft NPPF, but presumably will be once the final revised NPPF is published later this year. At this point, any further guidance will be reflected in this paper.

Spatial Development Strategy

Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) are new sub-regional strategic plans which will be prepared by strategic planning authorities. The Government published a consultation in February 2026 on the areas for producing spatial development strategies.¹⁰ The consultation proposes that the Wessex SDS covering Somerset will be developed across a wider geography of Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

Somerset plans, programmes and strategies

Existing local plans

The existing, adopted development plan documents¹¹ covering Somerset are each built around a spatial strategy comprising a settlement hierarchy and the distribution of housing and employment across these. Each plan has a different strategy, some with similar intentions, some markedly different. This reflects the vision and specific circumstances of each former LPA area, the political aspiration and will at the point in time that they were developed, and ultimately the consideration of alternative options on the table during that process. There is no guarantee that the existing spatial strategies would be chosen now, with updated context, different political leadership and consideration of the specific circumstances and options looking across Somerset as a whole. However, the existing plan spatial strategies are an important starting point.

Existing allocations and other commitments are also of relevance. They represent the current trajectory and distribution of growth across Somerset. However, it is important to recognise, in line with paragraph 127 of the current NPPF¹², that where

¹⁰ MHCLG (2026) Open consultation: Areas for producing spatial development strategies, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/areas-for-producing-spatial-development-strategies/areas-for-producing-spatial-development-strategies>

¹¹ See Adopted Local Plans at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/adopted-local-plans/>

¹² MHCLG (2024) NPPF, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

existing allocations have not yet come forward for development, they should be assessed alongside other sources of sites. This can help identify whether they are still considered to be suitable for the type of development for which they are allocated, and whether alternative types of development may be considered acceptable. Policy L1 of the consultation NPPF states that plans should not reallocate land for its previously identified purpose where there is no reasonable expectation that the use will come forward within the plan period, and consider whether allocation for an alternative use is appropriate instead.¹³ Sites which are subject to Local Development Orders (e.g. Gravity and Nexus 25) will also be appropriate to consider through this route. In some cases, existing plans also identify potential future directions of growth. These are not full allocations and are not usually identified by specific site boundaries, but rather an indication that development in a particular broad area may be suitable in the future. As such, it may be that if an existing allocation site has not yet come forward, or direction of growth has not yet come into play, and it does not align with the emerging vision, objectives and preferred spatial strategy option for the new Local Plan, then there is a chance that it may be de-allocated through this process. This being the case, there is no in-built assumption or bias that existing allocations and the spatial strategies that supported them will form the basis of the new spatial strategy for the new Local Plan.

Existing settlement hierarchies

The term 'settlement hierarchy' is used to refer to the relative role and function that different settlements (city, towns, villages, hamlets) play within Somerset. Within settlement hierarchies, 'tiers' are generally used to distinguish between settlements and the role and function that they play.

Existing settlement hierarchies differ between the former LPA areas. This reflects the size, role and function of settlements, the pattern of development and relationship between those settlements within each former LPA area. Terminology as well as defining characteristics of each tier within the hierarchies does not always align.

As such, and given that the new Somerset Local Plan is being developed on a much wider geography, with additional relationships and contexts to be considered, it was necessary to undertake a new baselining study to establish a sound settlement hierarchy looking across the whole of the Somerset LPA.

Figure 1, below identifies the different tiers within the settlement hierarchies for each former LPA. It identifies the different tiers next to one another with some consideration of similarities and differences in definition, however is intended as indicative only. There is some alignment, though it is not neat or absolute. In particular, it can be seen that the West Somerset and Mendip existing hierarchies clearly respond to the fact that those areas do not have a principal town/settlement/urban area, and are reliant on a single main centre or collection of

¹³ Consultation Draft NPPF (2025), Policy L1, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-proposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>

market towns. The former Mendip area is also missing a small market town/major rural centre type definition, which exists across the other areas – potentially because of the more distributed top tier of market towns negating this as a necessary role and function in the Mendip area.

Taunton Deane	West Somerset	South Somerset	Sedgemoor	Mendip
Strategic Urban Area	Main Centre	Strategically Significant Town	Principal Settlement	Market Towns
Market Town		Primary Market Towns	Market Towns	
Major Rural Centres	Rural Service Centres	Local Market Towns	Tier 1	
Minor Rural Centres		Rural Centres	Tier 2	
Villages	Primary Villages	Rural Settlements	Tier 3	Primary Villages
	Secondary Villages		Tier 4	Secondary Villages
Countryside (other smaller settlements)	Countryside (other smaller settlements)		Countryside	"Unclassified"

Figure 1 - Comparing existing settlement hierarchies across Somerset

Table 1 sets out the **Taunton Deane Settlement hierarchy** as set out in Policy SP1 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy 2011-2028 (2012):

Table 1 - Taunton Deane Core Strategy 2011-2028 Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement	Current Classification
Taunton	Strategic Urban Area
Wellington	Market Town
Bishop's Lydeard	Major Rural Centre
Wiveliscombe	Major Rural Centre
Churchinford	Minor Rural Centre
Cotford St Luke	Minor Rural Centre
Creech St Michael	Minor Rural Centre
Milverton	Minor Rural Centre
North Curry	Minor Rural Centre
Ashbrittle	Village
Ash Priors	Village
Bishopswood	Village
Blagdon Hill	Village
Bradford-on-Tone	Village
Burrowbridge	Village
Cheddon Fitzpaine	Village
Combe Florey	Village
Corfe	Village
Fitzhead	Village
Halse	Village
Hatch Beauchamp	Village
Henlade	Village
Kingston St Mary	Village
Langford Budville	Village

Lydeard St Lawrence	Village
Nynehead	Village
Oake	Village
Pitminster	Village
Ruishton	Village
Sampford Arundel	Village
Stoke St Gregory	Village
Stoke St Mary	Village
West Bagborough	Village
West Buckland	Village
West Monkton	Village

Table 2 sets out the **West Somerset Settlement hierarchy** as set out in Policy SC1 of the West Somerset Local Plan 2032 (2016):

Table 2 - West Somerset Local Plan 2032 Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement	Current Classification
Minehead & Alcombe	Main Centre
Watchet	Rural Service Centre
Williton	Rural Service Centre
Bicknoller	Primary Village
Carhampton	Primary Village
Crowcombe	Primary Village
Kilve	Primary Village
Stogumber	Primary Village
Stogursey	Primary Village
Washford	Primary Village
West Quantoxhead	Primary Village
Battleton	Secondary Village
Brompton Ralph	Secondary Village
Brushford	Secondary Village
Dunster Marsh	Secondary Village
Holford	Secondary Village

It should be noted that the (abandoned) **Somerset West and Taunton** Local Plan 2040 proposed a new settlement hierarchy covering the combined Taunton Deane and West Somerset settlements as part of the Issues and Options Consultation.¹⁴ This looked to provide a new coherent, combined hierarchy for the area. However, it was early in development and noted as being based on very high level assessment, to be supplemented by further work on the role and function of settlements. The proposed hierarchy extended to seven tiers as follows:

1. Strategic Growth Garden Town – Taunton
2. Sub-strategic Town – Wellington

¹⁴ Somerset West and Taunton Council (2020), Somerset West and Taunton Local Plan 2040 Issues and Options Document, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-west-and-taunton-local-plan-2040/>

3. Coastal Town (Major Rural Centre – Minehead/Alcombe)
4. Rural Centres – Bishop’s Lydeard, Watchet, Williton, Wiveliscombe
5. Minor Rural Centres – Bicknoller, Carhampton, Churchinford, Cotford St Luke, Creech St Michael, Crowcombe, Kilve, Milverton, North Curry, Stogumber, Stogursey, West Quantoxhead, Washford
6. Villages – Ashbrittle, Ash Priors, Battleton, Bishopswood, Blagdon Hill, Bradford-on-Tone, Brompton Ralph, Brushford, Burrowbridge, Cheddon Fitzpaine, Combe Florey, Corfe, Dunster Marsh, Fitzhead, Halse, Hatch Beauchamp, Henlade, Holford, Kingston St Mary, Langford Budville, Lydeard St Lawrence, Nynehead, Oake, Pitminster, Ruishton, Sampford Arundel, Stoke St Gregory, West Bagborough, West Buckland, West Monkton
7. Other smaller settlements and communities – not listed

Table 3 sets out the **South Somerset Settlement hierarchy** as set out in Policy SS1 of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 (2015):

Table 3 - South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement	Current Classification
Yeovil	Strategically Significant Town
Chard	Primary Market Town
Crewkerne	Primary Market Town
Ilminster	Primary Market Town
Wincanton	Primary Market Town
Ansford & Castle Cary	Local Market Town
Langport & Huish Episcopi	Local Market Town
Somerton	Local Market Town
Bruton	Rural Centre
Ilchester	Rural Centre
Martock & Bower Hinton	Rural Centre
Milborne Port	Rural Centre
South Petherton	Rural Centre
Stoke sub Hamdon	Rural Centre

It should be noted, that the (abandoned) South Somerset Local Plan Review proposed in the Preferred Options Consultation¹⁵ to redefine Yeovil from ‘Strategically Significant Town’ to ‘Principal Town’ and define a new tier of 12 ‘Village’ settlements, with Stoke sub Hamdon due to move from the list of Rural Centres into this new tier:

- Abbas & Templecombe
- Broadway & Horton
- Charlton Adam & Charlton Mackrell
- Combe St Nicholas
- Curry Rivel

¹⁵ South Somerset District Council (2019) South Somerset Local Plan Review 2016-2036 Preferred Options Consultation, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/south-somerset-local-plan-2020-to-2040/>

- Henstridge
- Keinton Mandeville
- North Cadbury
- Queen Camel
- Sparkford
- Stoke sub Hamdon
- Tatworth

Table 4 sets out the **Sedgemoor Settlement hierarchy** as set out in Policy S2 of the Sedgemoor Local Plan 2011-2032 (2019):

Table 4 - Sedgemoor Local Plan 2011-2032 Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement	Current Classification
Bridgwater	Principal Town
Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge	Market Town
Cheddar	Tier 1
North Petherton	Tier 1
Axbridge	Tier 2
Cannington	Tier 2
Nether Stowey	Tier 2
Puriton	Tier 2
Wedmore	Tier 2
Woolavington	Tier 2
Ashcott	Tier 3
Berrow	Tier 3
Brean	Tier 3
Brent Knoll	Tier 3
Combwich	Tier 3
East Brent & Rooksbridge	Tier 3
East Huntspill	Tier 3
Edington	Tier 3
Lympsham	Tier 3
Mark	Tier 3
Middlezoy	Tier 3
Pawlett	Tier 3
Shipham	Tier 3
Spaxton	Tier 3
Wembdon	Tier 3
West Huntspill	Tier 3
Westonzoyland	Tier 3
Bawdrip	Tier 4
Blackford	Tier 4
Catcott	Tier 4
Chedzoy	Tier 4
Chilton Polden	Tier 4
Cossington	Tier 4
North Newton	Tier 4

Othery	Tier 4
Shapwick	Tier 4
Weare and Lower Weare	Tier 4

Table 5 sets out the **Mendip Settlement hierarchy** as set out in Policy Core Policy 1 of the Mendip Local Plan Part I 2006-2029 (2014):

Table 5 - Mendip Local Plan Part I 2006-2029 Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement	Current Classification
Frome	Market Town
Glastonbury	Market Town
Shepton Mallet	Market Town
Street	Market Town
Wells	Market Town
Baltonsborough	Primary Village
Beckington	Primary Village
Butleigh	Primary Village
Chewton Mendip	Primary Village
Chilcompton	Primary Village
Coleford	Primary Village
Croscombe	Primary Village
Ditcheat	Primary Village
Draycott	Primary Village
Evercreech	Primary Village
Mells	Primary Village
Norton St Philip	Primary Village
Nunney	Primary Village
Rode	Primary Village
Stoke St Michael	Primary Village
Westbury Sub Mendip	Primary Village
Binegar & Gurney Slade	Secondary Village
Coxley	Secondary Village
Doulting	Secondary Village
Faulkland	Secondary Village
Holcombe	Secondary Village
Kilmersdon	Secondary Village
The Lydfords	Secondary Village
Meare / Westhay	Secondary Village
Oakhill	Secondary Village
Walton	Secondary Village
West Pennard	Secondary Village
Wookey	Secondary Village
Wookey Hole	Secondary Village

The Settlement Role and Function report considers the existing settlement hierarchies in more detail as well as providing the evidence for a new Somerset-wide settlement hierarchy.

Existing distribution of housing growth (in Local Plans)

In each of the existing Local Plans, housing growth is distributed across the patch with a direct relationship to the relevant settlement hierarchy. Each existing plan covers a different time period and has a different housing requirement and each plan deals with its housing requirement in a slightly different way.

Some plans distribute their housing requirement across numerous stages of plan production (e.g. Mendip), whilst others (e.g. Taunton Deane, South Somerset and Sedgemoor) distribute their housing requirement in one go, but leave the detail of some specific sites to future plans. Some contain complex scenarios determining the proportion of growth for a settlement (e.g. West Somerset).

In some cases, the full plan housing requirement is clearly attributed to settlements via the settlement hierarchy. In others, it is not immediately clear where a proportion of the overall housing requirement is attributed to. This is because some plans were due to rely upon future site allocation documents, windfalls and a built-in allowance for future flexibility. As such, some assumptions have had to be made and the percentage distribution of housing within a given plan has sometimes had to be calculated against the known element of this, rather than the total housing requirement.

Taunton Deane housing distribution:

Policy SP1 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy sets out a plan housing target of 17,000 homes and distributes that across the settlement hierarchy. It takes a comparatively centralised approach to housing distribution, with some 91% of housing attributed to Taunton (76%) and Wellington (15%) alone. This reflects the comparative role and function of these settlements compared to all others within the former Taunton Deane area, their connectivity and opportunities. With the Taunton Deane Core Strategy being developed off the back of the SW Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), this further reflects the identification of Taunton as one of the region's Strategically Significant Cities and Towns (to take approximately 700 dwellings per year) and Wellington as a named town (to take approximately 90 dwellings per year) within the wider Taunton-Bridgwater joint study area, and the New Growth Point designation which existed previously. The spatial strategy allocates some limited growth at rural centres where they have a range of services (though defers site selection to the future Site Allocations and Development Management DPD). The Core Strategy does not allocate or explicitly attribute any specific growth to smaller villages or settlements in the open countryside. However, there is an expectation that limited infill opportunities will exist within the villages, small scale affordable led schemes adjoining settlement limits and outside settlement limits, employment linked dwellings, replacement dwellings and conversions of existing buildings. The Policy distributes 16,150 of the overall 17,000

plan target, with the difference here being attributed to completions between 2008 and 2012, and an allowance for future windfalls.

Table 6 - Taunton Deane housing distribution in existing plans

Taunton Deane		
Settlement type	Number	%
Strategic Urban Area	13000	76%
Market Town	2500	15%
Major Rural Centres	400	2%
Minor Rural Centres	250	1%
Villages	0	0%
Countryside	0	0%
Total of the above	16150	95%
Total plan housing requirement	17000	100%

West Somerset housing distribution:

Policy SC2 of the West Somerset Local Plan 2032 establishes the overall housing requirement of 2,900 homes, and states that Minehead/Alcombe, Watchet and Williton should take a minimum of 1,450 between them. The specific allocations for key strategic sites in Minehead/Alcombe, Watchet and Williton are set out in subsequent policies MD2, WA2 and WI2. Supporting text for Policy SC2 further identifies an annualised average number of dwellings to be delivered through other development at Minehead/Alcombe, Watchet and Williton and in the primary and secondary villages per year. Further to this, the supporting text to Policy SC1 sets out that the 'limited development' allowed for at primary villages, and 'small scale development' allowed for at secondary villages should provide about a 10% increase in a settlement's total dwelling number over the plan period. The distribution recognises that Minehead has significantly more services and facilities than any other settlement in the area, but is inherently constrained by its geography (sea, coastal change, steep slopes and landscape impact associated with Exmoor National Park and Heritage Coast). As such, whilst 81% of housing is attributed to either Minehead, Watchet or Williton, it is more evenly shared between them than it might have been. Housing distribution below this level is very limited, and primarily associated with a 10% increase in housing stock at each settlement within the primary and secondary villages.

Table 7 - West Somerset housing distribution in existing plans

West Somerset		
Settlement type	Number	%
Main Centre	1037	36%
Rural Service Centres	1324	46%
Primary villages	162	6%

Secondary villages	50	2%
Countryside	0	0%

Total of the above	2573	89%
Total plan housing requirement	2900	100%

South Somerset housing distribution:

Policy SS4 of the South Somerset Local Plan establishes the overall housing requirement of 15,950 for the plan period. This is distributed across the settlement hierarchy in Policy SS5. The distribution takes a comparatively distributed approach. This reflected the historic settlement pattern of the South Somerset area, which is characterised by a range of market towns of varying scales, together with rural centres acting as hubs for other smaller villages and settlements. Yeovil, as a strategically significant town, was still identified to take a significant amount of the growth (again the draft SW RSS had previously identified it as one of the region's Strategically Significant Cities and Towns, to take approximately 320 dwellings per annum). Whilst 72% of the growth is accommodated across the top two tiers of the hierarchy, this is split across five settlements (Yeovil, Chard, Crewkerne, Ilminster and Wincanton). The strategy for the South area considers the rural settlements to be part of the countryside, where national countryside protection policies apply. As such specific criteria were set out for when development might be acceptable in these settlements. However, this was accompanied by a target of at least 2,242 dwellings, reflecting a combination of existing commitments and future requirements across the rural settlements.

Table 8 - South Somerset housing distribution in existing plans

Settlement type	Number	%
Strategically Significant Town	7441	47%
Primary Market Towns	4012	25%
Local Market Towns	1122	7%
Rural Centres	1133	7%
Rural Settlements	2242	14%
Open countryside	0	0%

Total of the above	15950	100%
Total plan housing requirement	15950	100%

Sedgemoor housing distribution:

Policy S2 of the Sedgemoor Local Plan sets out the housing requirement of 13,530 homes for the plan period and distributes them across the settlement hierarchy. It is

relatively centralised in approach, with 75% of the growth accommodated across just two settlements in Bridgwater (60%) and Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge (15%). Again, the draft SW RSS had previously identified Bridgwater as one of the region's Strategically Significant Cities and Towns, to take approximately 310 dwellings per annum as part of the wider Taunton-Bridgwater joint study area. The Sedgemoor plan effectively extended the A38 corridor approach by putting a significant amount of growth at Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge. Cheddar and North Petherton, as tier 1 settlements were identified for reasonable amounts of growth. Below this, housing was distributed more modestly amongst the more rural settlements. Whilst the strategy identified a specific figure for the countryside, this was purely in recognition of existing completed and committed developments in these areas.

Table 9 - Sedgemoor housing distribution in existing plans

Settlement type	Number	%
Principal Settlement	8118	60%
Market Towns	2030	15%
Tier 1	947	7%
Tier 2	816	6%
Tier 3	947	7%
Tier 4	396	3%
Countryside	276	2%
Total of the above	13530	100%
Total plan housing requirement	13530	100%

Mendip housing distribution:

Core Policy 2 of the Mendip Local Plan Part I sets out the overall requirement for 9,635 homes across the plan period and distributes this across the settlement hierarchy. This is supplemented by the supporting text, which identifies a specific minimum level of development for each of the main towns and primary and secondary villages. Key development sites were identified in local plan Part I in the towns with smaller and village sites allocated in Local Plan Part II. The total requirement included 505 dwellings not allocated to a specific settlement in order to extend the plan period to 2029. Following a Judicial Review challenge to the adoption of Local Plan Part II, a separate district-wide site allocation exercise was undertaken (Local Plan Limited Update) and adopted in 2025. Existing plans for Mendip look quite different to those of Taunton Deane, South Somerset or Sedgemoor in particular, due to the lack of a single principal settlement. Instead, the top tier of the settlement hierarchy is made up of five market towns (Frome, Glastonbury, Street, Shepton Mallet and Wells). Each of these market towns has a reasonable amount of self-containment and supports a wider rural hinterland. However, the area also looks beyond its boundaries to the north (Bristol, Bath and Midsomer Norton/Radstock), east (Trowbridge, Westbury and Warminster), south (Yeovil) and south-east (Taunton) to a greater or lesser degree. The strategy did not distribute housing evenly across the Market towns, but reflected their existing size,

role and function and opportunities. As such Frome saw more than double the housing requirement compared to Glastonbury. Below this, villages were classified as either primary or secondary villages, and housing was distributed through a combination of specific allocations, commitments and a floating commitment to accommodating within these settlements. The table below is based on a combination of Local Plans Part I, Part II and Limited Update. As such it varies slightly from the original spatial strategy purely as set out by Part I. It also contains an assumption that the floating commitment from Part I to be accommodated within the villages is split evenly between the primary and secondary villages. It should be noted that the southern expansion of towns in Bath and North East Somerset was not explicitly part of the spatial strategy for Mendip but additional sites were considered and allocated in the Limited Update. These homes are do not fall within the settlement hierarchy and as such are identified under the 'unclassified' row in the table below.

Table 10 - Mendip housing distribution in existing plans

Settlement type	Number	%
Market Towns	7601	79%
Primary villages	1138	12%
Secondary villages	705	7%
Unclassified	255	3%
Total of the above	9699	101%
Total plan housing requirement	9635	100%

Existing distribution of employment growth (in Local Plans)

Taunton Deane employment distribution:

Policy CP2 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy sets out for the plan to deliver sufficient employment land to meet economic forecasts of 11,900 net additional jobs over the plan period (2011-2028). In order to achieve this, the policy establishes specific land/floorspace targets for different sectors, which are then translated into specific policy requirements within mixed-use and standalone employment site allocation policies. The overwhelming focus of the economic growth from the Core Strategy is within Taunton, with complementary provision in Wellington. Policy SS8 set out that the future Site Allocations DPD would allocate a strategic employment site at Taunton. This was later captured by the Nexus25 Local Development Order. The Site Allocations and Development Management Plan DPD did go on to allocate some specific sites for employment uses in Wiveliscombe, Bishop's Lydeard and Cotford St Luke.

West Somerset employment distribution:

The West Somerset Local Plan to 2032 takes a permissive approach to economic development, looking to harness potential opportunities to strengthen and widen the economy. Strategic mixed-use development sites at Minehead, Watchet and Williton are identified to include some non-residential employment generating uses, and a single strategic employment site is allocated at Mart Road in Minehead.

South Somerset employment distribution:

Policy SS3 of the South Somerset Local Plan sets out an overarching target of 11,250 jobs across 149.51 hectares to be delivered over the plan period (2006-2028), and specific employment land requirements for each of the settlements in its settlement hierarchy. This requirement is focused particularly on Yeovil (44.84 ha or 30%), but large quotas are also assigned to Ilminster, Ansford/Castle Cary, Chard, and to a lesser extent Crewkerne. However, the policy notes that in Yeovil, Ilminster and Crewkerne this is associated with strategic employment sites saved from the old Local Plan, and in the case of Chard is closely related with aspirations within the Chard Regeneration Plan.

Sedgemoor employment distribution:

Policy S2 of the Sedgemoor Local Plan identifies a target for 75 hectares of land for B1, B2 and B8 uses and for 9,795 new jobs across the plan period (2011-2032). Whilst the policy does not set settlement specific targets, it clearly identifies Bridgwater as the focus for strategic employment growth, supported by Burnham and Highbridge, with some limited employment growth to meet local needs and support the rural economy in tier 1-4 settlements. The supporting text explains that Gravity will be dealt with separately and in addition to the above given that it is of wider regional significance, separate to the day-to-day employment land provision for a sector specialist. The Gravity site, whilst the subject of a saved Local Plan Policy relating to Huntspill Energy Park, is now captured by the Gravity Local Development Order.

Mendip employment distribution:

Core Policy 3 of the Mendip Local Plan Part 1 identifies a target for 9,410 new jobs across 62.1 hectares of employment land over the plan period (2006-2029). This is distributed to each of the five market towns in the settlement hierarchy as a projected jobs number, floorspace demand and overall employment land requirement, with rural areas dealt with separately to support the rural economy, by the approach set out in Core Policy 4. Frome is identified to take 20.2ha (33%) of the employment land requirements, with Shepton Mallett (23%) and to a lesser extent Wells (18%) taking reasonable proportions. Street (16%) and Glastonbury (10%) take comparatively less.

Future spatial strategy for employment

The Somerset Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA)¹⁶ looks at how Somerset's economy is doing now and what it might need in the future in terms of land and buildings for businesses. It helps Somerset Council plan for jobs, business growth, and the types of spaces companies will need up to the year 2045. It is a technical document that gathers and analyses factual data and will feed into

¹⁶ Hardisty Jones on behalf of Somerset Council (2025), Somerset Economic Development Needs Assessment, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/evidence-base/>

development of the Local Plan. The EDNA explains that Somerset is divided into four Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMAs):

- **A303 Corridor** (Yeovil area): 30% of the population and jobs. Strong in manufacturing, especially aerospace, but needs to diversify beyond Yeovil.
- **A361 Corridor** (Frome and Glastonbury area): 20% of the population. High education levels but lower job growth. Strong in tourism, food and drink, and business services, but faces competition from nearby cities like Bath and Bristol, with more commuting out of the area.
- **M5 Corridor** (Bridgwater and Taunton areas): 43% of the population and 45% of jobs. Strongest job growth, with key sectors in manufacturing, public services, and logistics. A hub for clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and logistics. The Gravity Smart Campus and Hinkley Point C are key growth drivers.
- **West Somerset Coast** (Minehead and Watchet area): Less than 10% of population and jobs. High number of small businesses but declining business activity. Focused on agriculture and tourism, with limited office-based jobs.

The EDNA includes forecasts for how Somerset's economy might grow between 2025 and 2045, and frames this in respect of jobs forecasts and economic outputs, as defined against the forecasts provided by Cambridge Econometrics (CE) and Oxford Economics (OE):

- **Jobs Forecast:** CE expects Somerset to gain 30,000 jobs, while OE predicts 15,000. The average of the two is 22,600 new jobs over 20 years. This is a slower growth rate than Somerset has seen in the past.
- **Economic Output (GVA):** Both forecasters agree more closely on economic output. CE predicts a £3.8 billion increase in GVA (a measure of economic value), and OE predicts £3.4 billion. The average is £3.6 billion, or 1.2% growth per year - faster than in recent years.

The employment sites and premises demand identified within the EDNA provides analysis of what these forecasts could mean for different sectors based on low, medium and high growth scenarios:

- **Offices** (e.g. for professional services): Somerset will need between 230,000 and 260,000 square metres of new or improved office space. Of this, 110,000 to 160,000 square metres will need to be built on new sites.
- **Industrial** (e.g. manufacturing): Despite a predicted decline in manufacturing jobs, Somerset still needs 500,000 to 850,000 square metres of industrial space, mostly to replace old or unsuitable buildings. Between 300,000 and 510,000 square metres will need to be on new sites.
- **Warehousing and logistics** (e.g. storage and distribution): Demand is strong, with 820,000 square metres needed, and 490,000 square metres of that on new sites.
- **Most demand** is in the M5 Corridor (around Taunton and Bridgwater), followed by the A303 Corridor (Yeovil area) and A361 Corridor (Frome and Glastonbury). The West Somerset Coast will see the least demand.

Growth is expected in construction, admin and support services, education, health, and recreation. Manufacturing is expected to decline, though this may not reduce demand for industrial space due to automation and productivity gains. Office-based sectors like professional services and IT show mixed forecasts - some growth, but not as strong as other areas. Different forecasting methods lead to different results, so the report uses a range of scenarios rather than relying on a single number. This helps Somerset plan more flexibly for the future.

The Somerset Employment Land Review (ELR)¹⁷ analyses the supply of sites for employment uses in Somerset. It assesses existing employment sites, allocations and potential future sites which could provide further supply (e.g. submitted for employment uses via the Local Plan Call for Sites), and determines whether they are potentially suitable or not to meet modern employment requirements. Through this, and comparison with demand data arising from the EDNA, it has been possible to understand how well existing established and allocated sites might meet demands in each of the four Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMAs). The conclusion of the ELR is that balancing demand and supply depends on all existing sites and allocations being retained in employment use, and if they are lost to other uses, then considering further allocations may be necessary. However, for Somerset to meet its growth potential, there could be a particular need to consider further allocations in the A303 Corridor and West Somerset Coast FEMAs. This means that future employment growth is most likely to be focused on areas with existing concentrations of employment sites, and aligned to the aspirations and opportunities set out within the Economic Prosperity Strategy¹⁸ which particularly focuses attention around:

- Clean energy innovation - Bridgwater - Hinkley – Gravity
- Aerospace and defence – Yeovil
- Digital and data - Taunton - Bridgwater - Gravity

Potential further supply options included within the ELR are primarily focused around the key infrastructure of the corridors making up the four FEMAs, with significant concentrations along the M5 corridor and A303 corridor, being particularly well linked to the above.

The nature of employment growth and the necessary economic investment required to deliver this means that it is very much market-led. A spatial strategy which attempts to force employment growth to fit a particular pattern and spatial focus which do not align with where the market wants to be, is very likely to fail in delivery. As such, whilst there is good opportunity to help shape delivery through appropriate site selection and allocation and alignment of housing and employment opportunities and connectivity, there is very little opportunity to shape the overarching spatial

¹⁷ Hardisty Jones on behalf of Somerset Council (2026), Somerset Employment Land Review, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/evidence-base/> (once available)

¹⁸ Somerset Council (2025) Somerset Economic Prosperity Strategy 2025-2045, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/business-economy-and-licences/somerset-economic-prosperity-strategy-2025-2045/>

strategy for employment uses. In conclusion, therefore, it is not considered that there would be any reasonable alternatives but to focus employment growth around these corridors and in relation to the best performing opportunity sites within these areas.

3. Local Plan Vision and Outcomes

The emerging draft vision and objectives have been developed following early engagement sessions and evidence gathering. The Somerset Local Plan Early Engagement Report included a prototype vision statement.¹⁹ However, this has been further iterated in response to baseline evidence, development of the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and through undertaking of a SWOT Analysis. This is explained further in the Draft Vision and Outcomes Report.²⁰

Vision

Figure 2, below sets out the emerging Vision for the Somerset Local Plan

By 2045, Somerset will be a greener, fairer and more flourishing county where everyone can live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives in beautiful and distinctive places.

New development will respond positively to Somerset’s landscapes, coast, historic towns and villages, supporting thriving communities and a strong sense of local identity.

The Local Plan will focus growth where it can be well-served by sustainable transport and infrastructure, making it easier to walk, wheel, cycle and use public transport, and reducing the need to travel by car. Homes will be more affordable, energy-efficient and inclusive, meeting the needs of all ages and communities.

Somerset’s economy will be more productive, innovative and resilient, building on strengths in low-carbon energy, advanced manufacturing, agri-food, tourism and the creative and digital sectors, and offering good quality jobs and skills opportunities across the county.

Nature and the historic environment will be protected and restored, with a richer network of green and blue spaces supporting biodiversity, climate resilience, health and wellbeing. The Plan will support a just transition to net-zero, ensuring that the benefits of a greener economy and better places are shared fairly by all communities.

Figure 2 - Draft Vision for the Somerset Local Plan 2045

¹⁹ Allies & Morrison on behalf of Somerset Council (2025), Somerset Local Plan Early Engagement Report, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/early-engagement/>

²⁰ Somerset Council (2026) Draft Vision and Outcomes Report, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/scoping-consultation-reg-20-june-to-july-2026/>

The emerging vision aims to strike a balance between aspirational ambition and recognition of Somerset’s current attractiveness and charms. This is particularly evident in the framing of the vision around making the most of its existing environmental, economic and social assets. The landscapes, coast, towns and villages and local identity are key. The economy has existing strengths that can be built on, as well as new opportunities arising. Somerset’s wonderful natural and historic environment must play a key part in improving lives, building resilience, mitigating climate change and transitioning our economy.

There is a specific reference to the important role of our historic towns and villages, which support “*thriving communities*”, and that new homes should meet “*the needs of all ages and communities*”. There is an expectation that these historic environments are protected and restored, linked to an improved network of green and blue infrastructure, whilst also recognising the existing economic strengths and sustainable transport options that these settlements hold.

There is clear intent to drive inward investment and local innovation to create an economy which is “*more productive, innovative and resilient, building on [our] strengths*” as well as responding to and enabling “*good quality jobs and skills opportunities across the county*” to both attract and retain younger and talented people. This responds to early engagement suggestions that Somerset “*draws people not simply for its scenic charm, but for its forward-thinking energy and progressive ideas*”. However, it is recognised that this is reliant upon focusing growth in areas “*well-served by sustainable transport and infrastructure*”.

The area’s nature and landscapes are enthusiastically protected, and aspired to be enhanced and restored by the vision, whilst recognising the value and importance of Somerset’s agricultural heritage and economy and the need to ensure its sustainability going forward. Responding to climate change through enhancing networks of green and blue spaces, building resilience, recognising the economic opportunities in doing so, and ensuring a just-transition are central to the vision.

The vision’s key tag line puts people at the heart of things: “*where everyone can live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives in beautiful and distinctive places*”.

Key considerations emerging from the above for developing spatial strategy options for Somerset include:

- Ambitious growth in key settlements must be balanced with ensuring compact urban forms and climate resilience.
- Historic settlement patterns are an important part of Somerset’s identity and should remain so into the future.
- Sustainable transport and infrastructure connectivity (physical and digital) must be the backbone for where new growth is accommodated, and for achieving greater inward investment and local innovation within the economy.
- Landscape, nature and the agricultural economy are key defining features of Somerset, which should be respected.

- Creating places that enable people to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives in beautiful and distinctive places is key to a successful sustainable development strategy.

Outcomes

The Vision is supported by 10 measurable Outcomes, which are designed to express what success should look like in Somerset by 2045. The Outcomes are grouped into six themes as set out in Table 11, below.

Table 11 - Draft Outcomes for the Somerset Local Plan 2045

A Greener, Climate-Resilient Somerset	Outcome 1	A low-carbon development pattern and built environment
	Outcome 2	Nature recovery and a stronger network of green and blue spaces
Homes for All	Outcome 3	Meeting Somerset's housing needs, including rural and settlement pattern
	Outcome 4	More affordable, accessible and energy-efficient homes
A Healthy, Connected Somerset	Outcome 5	Better access to everyday services by walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport
	Outcome 6	Places that support healthier lives and reduced inequalities
A Flourishing, Productive Somerset	Outcome 7	Employment land and workspace that support Somerset's key sectors
	Outcome 8	More vibrant and resilient town and local centres
Beautiful, Distinctive and Inclusive Places	Outcome 9	Locally distinctive, well-designed and inclusive development
Delivery, Infrastructure and Implementation	Outcome 10	Infrastructure in step with growth and a deliverable, responsive plan

Each emerging Outcome is supported by a narrative explaining what this means for the plan, providing further context and intention behind the headline Outcome. These narratives provide particular further key considerations for developing spatial strategy options in Somerset. As such, key aspects are summarised under the relevant Outcome, below:

1. A low-carbon development pattern and built environment:
 - Location of development will make a demonstrable contribution to reducing carbon emissions
 - Higher proportion of homes and jobs to be planned for in locations with realistic alternatives to car use
2. Nature recovery and a stronger network of green and blue spaces:

- Help to deliver more connected and resilient network of habitats and green infrastructure
 - New development will enhance access to nature for Somerset's residents and visitors
3. Meeting Somerset's housing needs, including rural and settlement pattern:
- Deliver the homes needed to support communities and economy.
 - Reflect the role of larger urban areas, market and coastal towns, rural service centres and villages.
 - Support vitality of rural communities where consistent with settlement strategy
 - Avoid unnecessary dispersal of development that would increase car dependency or pressure on sensitive environments
4. More affordable, accessible and energy-efficient homes:
- Provide genuinely affordable homes in line with local needs
 - Enable housing in locations well related to services and facilities
5. Better access to everyday services by walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport:
- More residents – including those in rural and coastal communities – will be able to reach everyday services, schools, jobs, local centres and green spaces by walking, wheeling, cycling or public transport
 - Focus significant growth where sustainable travel choices can realistically be provided or improved
 - Support bus and rail improvements and mobility hubs to connect rural settlement to towns and jobs
6. Places that support healthier lives and reduced inequalities:
- Create safe, attractive streets and spaces which support physical activity, social interaction and independent mobility
7. Employment land and workspace that support Somerset's key sectors:
- Employment land and workspace that supports growth in key sectors, specific economic roles of settlements in Somerset, and rural economy
 - Employment sites which are well connected to the labour market and sustainable transport networks, and able to adapt over time
8. More vibrant and resilient town and local centres:
- Support a broader mix of uses in centres – compact settlements and urban intensification
9. Locally distinctive, well-designed and inclusive development
- Respond positively to the character and heritage of Somerset's towns, villages, landscapes and coast
10. Infrastructure in step with growth and a deliverable, responsive plan:
- Align strategic and local infrastructure (including transport, schools, health facilities, utilities, digital, green and blue infrastructure and community facilities) with the spatial strategy and site allocations
 - Remain deliverable and responsive

Other outputs from early engagement

The [Somerset Local Plan Early Engagement Report](#) identifies key considerations emerging from the early engagement work in relation to the plan's approach to spatial growth. These are split into five considerations relating to where and how new homes might be accommodated, and four critical constraints to where new homes should be planned.

Where and how new homes might be accommodated:

1. A brownfield first approach – to introduce greater density in urban areas, regenerate centres and address economic and social challenges. Particular locations for this focus were identified as being Yeovil, Bridgwater, Taunton, Wellington, Frome, Street, Glastonbury, Chard, Ilminster, and Highbridge & Burnham.
2. Proximity to employment – new homes to be in locations close to or with good access to jobs for residents, and to create new jobs alongside these. Larger towns should be central to this, alongside areas of economic focus around North Petherton and Gravity out to Cossington.
3. Infrastructure-led growth – including potential for growth of settlements located nearby existing train stations or with potential for new stations. This would minimise infrastructure investment needed and avoid isolated and car-based neighbourhoods. Wellington, Langport, Somerton Castle Cary and Bruton could be foci in this regard. The importance of the A303 as a road link was also recognised.
4. Reviving villages – differing views were given about growth at villages. Most considered sensitive and proportionate growth could be acceptable, with a pro-rata uplift of 10% suggested by many. However, there was recognition of the positive transformation effect that could come from more significant growth at specific villages, to bring new life and opportunities to these settlements.
5. New communities – given the scale of housing targets, there was some support for one or two significant new communities, but these would need to be located around access to existing infrastructure and employment. Proximity to the rail network was of particular interest here.

Where should be avoided when planning new homes:

1. Flood risk areas
2. Smaller villages
3. National landscapes
4. High quality farmland

4. Linkages to other Local Plan themes

The spatial strategy has links with all other Local Plan themes. It is the spatial interpretation of the vision and objectives, and represents the overall strategy for accommodating housing and employment requirements, cognisant of constraints

and opportunities, impacts and benefits of different settlement and growth patterns, and how likely development might be to achieve plan objectives and policy requirements on developable sites.

Determining the preferred spatial strategy is an iterative process. It moves from initial optioneering, to high level and then progressively more detailed assessment. The Sustainability Appraisal is a key process used to support this iteration and refinement. This ensures that the preferred spatial strategy is justifiable, deliverable and will result in sustainable development.

Initial site assessment work will inform some spatial strategy optioneering with an understanding of known available and potentially suitable sites. However, the site selection work will more significantly be influenced by the preferred spatial strategy. Once a preferred spatial strategy has been established, this will act as a filter on the longer list of potentially suitable sites.

There are a number of core local plan themes which have relevance to the development of spatial strategy options. Other plan themes will be of relevance, but more so in relation to assessment of specific site options. Some issues may be relevant at both scales. The core local plan themes identified as being of key relevance to spatial strategy options are:

- Climate change
- Flood risk
- Coastal change
- Protected landscapes
- Employment
- Infrastructure and services
- Transport and connectivity
- Likely Significant Environmental effects (SA)
- Likely Significant Effects upon European Sites (HRA)

The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process is intended to promote sustainable development by assessing the extent to which the emerging plan, when judged against reasonable alternatives, will help to achieve relevant environmental, economic and social objectives. An important role of the SA is to feed into the development, evolution and refinement of the spatial strategy, site allocation and policy options for the Local Plan including reasonable alternatives, predict and evaluate their likely effects, and consider ways of mitigating potential adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects. It is not the job of the SA to make decisions but rather to ensure information as to the sustainability effects of plan options is available to inform the decision-making process which may also take other factors into account. Baseline evidence gathering and understanding of trends and issues relevant to the plan have been used to inform development of spatial strategy options. It would be disproportionate and unnecessary for every conceivable spatial strategy permutation to be subject to SA, as not every option would be considered 'reasonable'. It is important that the SA process is proportionate and considers only the preferred option and what are described as reasonable alternatives. The

reasonableness of an option is defined within the parameters of what the plan is seeking to achieve. In accordance with case law²¹, if an option does not achieve the objectives/outcomes of the plan, it is not considered reasonable. As such, an initial long-list of spatial strategy options was developed and subject to high level assessment by officers before determining a short-list of reasonable options suitable to be considered via the SA process.

5. Identifying the issues and developing the options

The issues identified through national context, Somerset context, data analysis, early engagement, Duty to Co-operate discussions and evidence base are:

- Settlement role and function
- Past delivery
- Urban capacity
- Employment
- Infrastructure capacity
- Settlement revival
- New communities
- Climate change, flood risk and coastal change
- Protected landscapes
- Transport and connectivity
- Ecological sensitivity
- Opportunities
- Call for Sites
- Duty to Co-operate / cross-boundary

Whilst ‘health and wellbeing’ is not explicitly mentioned within the above list, it has been identified as a cross-cutting theme for development of the Plan in recognition that there are many factors and issues (including those above) influencing health and wellbeing outcomes. The Sustainability Appraisal of the Plan incorporates Health Impact Assessment, and this will assist in ensuring that the health and wellbeing implications of different spatial strategy options are understood and influence the preferred spatial strategy for the Plan.

This section of the topic paper goes through each of the above issues. Not every issue necessarily corresponds to one spatial strategy option. However, the analysis associated with each issue within this section has helped to inform the development of options, which are set out. The analysis also explains why, in some cases, issues did not lead to the development of explicit potential options, and why some identified initial long-list options were considered not to be reasonable and were as such discounted in arriving at a core short-list of reasonable options to take forward. This should be read in combination with the review set out in Appendix 1. The analysis

²¹ R (Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland Limited) v The Welsh Ministers [2015] EWHC 776 (Admin) at [88], available at <https://www.pacni.gov.uk/publications/ma001b-r-friends-earth-england-wales-and-northern-ireland-limited-v-welsh-ministers>

also begins to explore how some options might in some cases begin to iterate further.

It should be noted that internal engagement and strategic alignment took place with a range of stakeholders alongside and subsequent to identifying the options. Section 6 of this paper clarifies the initial long-list options which arose from the analysis in this section, provides further detail on the internal engagement and strategic alignment that has taken place in relation to the options that were developed, and summarises the core reasons why some options were considered reasonable to take forward, and why others were not, drawing upon the analysis in this section and the engagement and alignment that took place. Figure 3, below sets out the broad process used to develop the options and work towards the core options to take forward.

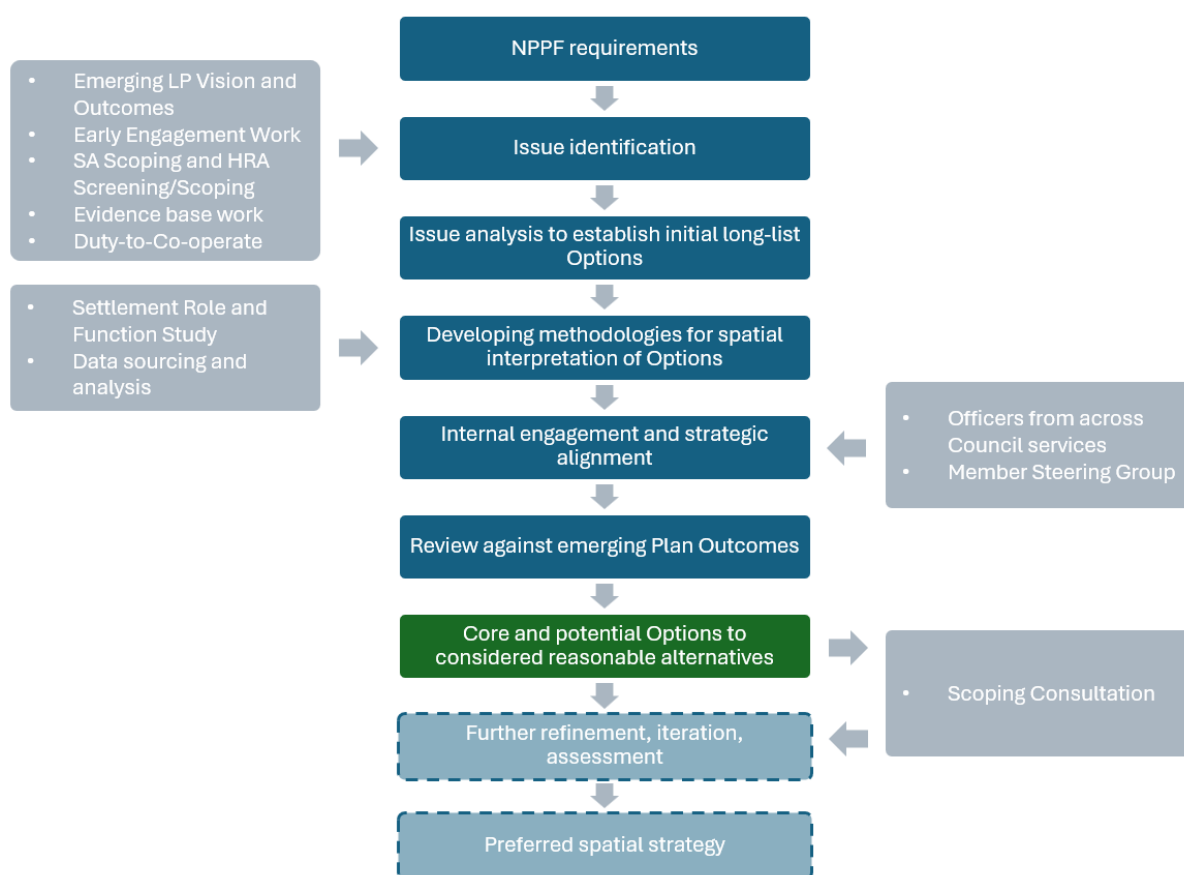


Figure 3 - Process for developing spatial strategy options

Settlement role and function

NPPF Policy S2 identifies that settlements are an important component for the definition of spatial strategy.²² NPPF policy HO4 also identifies the importance of

²² Consultation Draft NPPF (2025), Policy S2, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-proposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>

sustainable communities and having sufficient access to services and employment, nearby and in larger towns by sustainable transport.²³ This highlights that settlement role and function should play an important role in defining spatial strategy.

As described above, the existing settlement hierarchies set out in the adopted local plans were developed in relation to the role and function of settlements within each former LPA area. As such, given that the new Somerset Local Plan is being developed on a much wider geography, with additional relationships and contexts to be considered, it was necessary to undertake a new baselining study to establish a sound settlement hierarchy looking across the whole of the Somerset LPA. More detail on this is set out in a separate report on the Settlement Role and Function Study, however, below is a summary of the process and outcomes of this.

The Settlement Role and Function Study collates detailed information on individual settlements regarding the settlement size and population, employment role and economic activity, access to services and facilities and environmental sensitivities (development constraints). This information is used to assess the relative sustainability of settlements and to identify constraints that may influence future growth. By comparing the characteristics and functionality of individual settlements, the study helps to establish a robust spatial strategy and informs decisions about the pattern, scale and nature of future development.

A key starting point was the previous role and function studies undertaken for each of the existing plans (as well as that for the abandoned South Somerset Local Plan Review and Somerset West and Taunton Local Plan). This meant taking account of numerous smaller villages and hamlets that exist in Somerset that did not feature within the final adopted settlement hierarchies. As a result of the methodology, some settlements also ended up being considered either jointly where they had been separate previously, or vice versa. By taking a methodical review of a series of factors influencing a settlement's role and function within Somerset it was possible to provide a reasonable evidenced justification for why each settlement fits into one of four core tiers or should be considered as part of the open countryside.

Figure 4, below explains broadly how the four new tiers of settlement hierarchy relate to those of existing plans (and in the case of South Somerset, that of the abandoned Local Plan Review). Whilst there are four core tiers proposed, tier 3 is split into 3a and 3b, recognising that some medium sized settlements provide a slightly more strategic role than others. It should be noted that this table does not indicate that just because a settlement was previously identified as being a 'secondary village' for instance, then it would automatically now be considered as a 'tier 4' settlement. The table merely tries to translate the broad role and function of settlements within a tier across with existing hierarchies. In some cases, settlements have moved up or down in the hierarchy as a result of the detailed application of the methodology.

²³ Consultation Draft NPPF (2025), Policy HO4

Taunton Deane	West Somerset	South Somerset	Sedgemoor	Mendip	New Somerset Council tiers	
Strategic Urban Area	Main Centre	Strategically Significant Town	Principal Settlement	Market Towns	Tier 1	
Market Town		Primary Market Towns	Market Towns		Tier 2	
Major Rural Centres	Rural Service Centres	Local Market Towns	Tier 1		Tier 3a	
Minor Rural Centres		Rural Centres	Tier 2		Tier 3b	
Villages	Primary Villages	Rural Settlements	Tier 3	Primary Villages	Tier 4	
	Secondary Villages		Tier 4			Secondary Villages
Countryside (other smaller settlements)	Countryside (other smaller settlements)			Countryside	"Unclassified"	Open Countryside

Figure 4 – Tiers of existing plan settlement hierarchies in relation to the proposed Somerset Settlement Hierarchy

The final proposed settlement hierarchy for Somerset is set out in Table 12, below:

Table 12 - Final proposed Somerset Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement	Tier
Bridgwater	Tier 1
Taunton	Tier 1
Yeovil	Tier 1
Chard	Tier 2
Cheddar	Tier 2
Crewkerne	Tier 2
Frome	Tier 2
Glastonbury	Tier 2
Highbridge & Burnham (inc. Burnham Marine)	Tier 2
Minehead & Alcombe	Tier 2
Shepton Mallet	Tier 2
Street	Tier 2
Wellington	Tier 2
Wells	Tier 2
Wincanton (inc. Bayford)	Tier 2
Ansford & Castle Cary	Tier 3a
Bruton & Pitcombe	Tier 3a
Ilminster	Tier 3a
Langport & Huish Episcopi	Tier 3a
North Petherton	Tier 3a
Somerton	Tier 3a
Abbas & Templecombe	Tier 3b
Axbridge	Tier 3b
Berrow & Brean	Tier 3b
Bishop's Lydeard	Tier 3b
Cannington	Tier 3b

Chilcompton	Tier 3b
Cotford St Luke	Tier 3b
Creech St Michael	Tier 3b
Evercreech	Tier 3b
Ilchester	Tier 3b
Martock & Bower Hinton	Tier 3b
Milborne Port	Tier 3b
Nether Stowey	Tier 3b
South Petherton	Tier 3b
Watchet	Tier 3b
Williton	Tier 3b
Wiveliscombe	Tier 3b
Ash	Tier 4
Ashcott	Tier 4
Baltonsborough	Tier 4
Beckington	Tier 4
Blackford	Tier 4
Brent Knoll	Tier 4
North & East Coker	Tier 4
Catcott & Edington	Tier 4
Charlton Horethorne	Tier 4
Chewton Mendip	Tier 4
Chilthorne Domer	Tier 4
Coleford	Tier 4
Combe St Nicholas (inc. Wadeford)	Tier 4
Combwich	Tier 4
Coxley & Upper Coxley & Coxley Wick	Tier 4
Croscombe	Tier 4
Crowcombe	Tier 4
Curry Mallet	Tier 4
Curry Rivel	Tier 4
Ditcheat	Tier 4
Draycott	Tier 4
East Brent	Tier 4
Hambridge	Tier 4
Haselbury Plucknett	Tier 4
Hatch Beauchamp	Tier 4
Henstridge	Tier 4
High Ham	Tier 4
Hillcommon (inc. Oake)	Tier 4
Hinton St George	Tier 4
Horton (and Broadway)	Tier 4
Huntspill (inc. West Huntspill)	Tier 4
Ilton	Tier 4
Keinton Mandeville	Tier 4
Kilmersdon	Tier 4

Kingston St Mary	Tier 4
Langford Budville	Tier 4
Leigh-On-Mendip	Tier 4
Long Sutton	Tier 4
Lympsham	Tier 4
Mark (and Mark Causeway)	Tier 4
Mells	Tier 4
Merriot	Tier 4
Middlezoy	Tier 4
Milverton	Tier 4
Montacute (inc. East Stoke)	Tier 4
North Cadbury	Tier 4
North Curry	Tier 4
North Newton	Tier 4
Norton St Philip	Tier 4
Norton Sub Hamdon	Tier 4
Nunney & Nunney Catch	Tier 4
Oakhill	Tier 4
Puriton	Tier 4
Queen Camel	Tier 4
Rode	Tier 4
Ruishton (inc. Henlade)	Tier 4
Shepton Beauchamp	Tier 4
Shipham	Tier 4
Spaxton	Tier 4
Stogumber	Tier 4
Stogursey	Tier 4
Stoke St Gregory (inc. Meare Green)	Tier 4
Stoke St Michael	Tier 4
Stoke sub Hamdon	Tier 4
Tatworth (inc. South Chard & Chard Junction)	Tier 4
Tintinhull	Tier 4
Walton	Tier 4
Washford	Tier 4
Weare and Lower Weare	Tier 4
Wedmore	Tier 4
West Chinnock	Tier 4
West Coker	Tier 4
Westbury Sub Mendip	Tier 4
Westonzoyland	Tier 4
Winsham	Tier 4
Wookey	Tier 4
Woolavington	Tier 4
Barrington	Countryside
Barton St David	Countryside
Barwick (inc. Stoford)	Countryside

Batcombe	Countryside
Bawdrip	Countryside
Bicknoller	Countryside
Binegar & Gurney Slade	Countryside
Blagdon Hill	Countryside
Blue Anchor	Countryside
Bradford-on-Tone	Countryside
Brushford	Countryside
Buckland Dinham	Countryside
Butleigh	Countryside
Carhampton	Countryside
Chedzoy	Countryside
Chilton Polden	Countryside
Churchinford	Countryside
Compton Dundon and Dundon	Countryside
Cossington	Countryside
Cross	Countryside
Drayton	Countryside
East Chinnock	Countryside
East Huntspill	Countryside
Easton	Countryside
Edithmead	Countryside
Faulkland	Countryside
Fitzhead	Countryside
Fivehead	Countryside
Galhampton	Countryside
Halse	Countryside
Hardington Moor/Hardington Mandeville	Countryside
Holcombe	Countryside
Horsington	Countryside
Kilve	Countryside
Kingsbury Episcopi	Countryside
Kingsdon	Countryside
Lydeard St Lawrence	Countryside
Marston Magna	Countryside
Meare (inc. Oxenpill)	Countryside
Misterton	Countryside
North Perrott	Countryside
Odcombe	Countryside
Othery	Countryside
Pawlett	Countryside
Pilton	Countryside
Priddy	Countryside
Rooks Bridge	Countryside
Seavington St Michael	Countryside
Shapwick	Countryside

Sparkford	Countryside
Stoke St Mary	Countryside
Stratton-On-The-Fosse	Countryside
The Charltons - Charlton Adam & Charlton Mackrell	Countryside
The Lydfords	Countryside
Theale	Countryside
Wanstrow	Countryside
West Camel	Countryside
West Pennard	Countryside
West Quantoxhead	Countryside
Witham Friary	Countryside
Wookey Hole	Countryside

This new settlement hierarchy provides an important framework for the spatial strategy options to consider focusing growth around. Identification within a specific tier does not in itself allocate a specific housing requirement. It is the spatial strategy, iterated with consideration of site options, which determines what level of housing should be distributed to each tier, and settlement within.

Existing plan spatial strategies

The existing plan spatial strategies are set out in section 2 of this report, above. Looking across Somerset, it would be possible to consider these as blueprints for spatial strategy options in three distinct ways:

- Aggregated – Taking existing strategies and adding together all growth associated with settlements in a given tier of the new settlement hierarchy, to arrive at an overall percentage of growth for that tier, then distributing this percentage of the new Local Plan growth evenly across all settlements in that tier.
- Combined – Using the existing pattern of growth distribution from each area and continuing this for into the Somerset Local Plan resulting in a mixed approach within settlement tiers across Somerset.
- Individual – Taking the aggregated approach, but applying the pattern of growth distribution of a selected existing individual plan, then applying this to the whole of Somerset. Given that the Taunton Deane, South Somerset and Sedgemoor plans are the only ones with settlements across all tiers of the settlement hierarchy, these could each be presented as potential options.

It should be noted that the existing spatial strategies embody thinking and context from the time that they were being developed, which in some cases is some 15 or more years old. Whilst, it is correct to consider them, this may affect how reasonable they are as options and alternatives.

Taking the above as blueprints, provided five spatial strategy options for consideration as part of the initial long-list. These are presented as summaries in Figure 5, below:

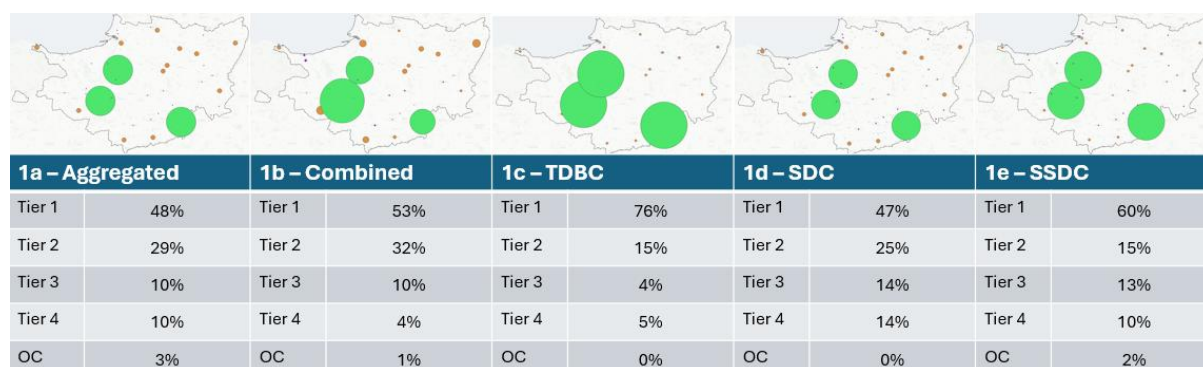


Figure 5 - Summarised spatial strategy options derived from existing spatial strategies

Past delivery

Housing monitoring was consulted to understand how housing has been delivered in Somerset over recent years. Each area of Somerset still undertakes housing monitoring in slightly different ways, reflecting former LPA historic approaches, different IT systems and resourcing capacity. Each area's monitoring also goes back over different time periods reflecting the different ages of the current adopted plans. As such, it was considered most appropriate to consider housing delivery over just the last 10 years as this would provide the most consistent data over a decent period of time. Table 13 below sets out the level of housing delivery per settlement over both the relevant plan period up to 31 March 2024, and the 10 year period 2014-2024, together with the percentage of the overall Somerset housing delivery provided by that settlement over the 10 year period.

Table 13 - Housing delivery by settlement

Settlement	Tier	Over relevant plan period to date (note length of period differs by area)	Over 10 years 2014-2024	% of Somerset's last 10 years growth
Bridgwater	Tier 1	3923	2757	11.2%
Taunton	Tier 1	6053	4247	17.2%
Yeovil	Tier 1	3573	1851	7.5%
Chard	Tier 2	1197	677	2.7%
Cheddar	Tier 2	450	351	1.4%
Crewkerne	Tier 2	463	115	0.5%
Frome	Tier 2	1968	1047	4.2%
Glastonbury	Tier 2	842	376	1.5%
Highbridge & Burnham (inc. Burnham Marine)	Tier 2	794	618	2.5%
Minehead & Alcombe	Tier 2	365	245	1.0%
Shepton Mallet	Tier 2	751	225	0.9%
Street	Tier 2	867	320	1.3%

Wellington	Tier 2	2162	1443	5.9%
Wells	Tier 2	1332	1096	4.4%
Wincanton (inc. Bayford)	Tier 2	815	370	1.5%
Ansford & Castle Cary	Tier 3a	378	318	1.3%
Bruton & Pitcombe	Tier 3a	174	70	0.3%
Ilminster	Tier 3a	381	216	0.9%
Langport & Huish Episcopi	Tier 3a	479	260	1.1%
North Petherton	Tier 3a	297	279	1.1%
Somerton	Tier 3a	608	542	2.2%
Abbas & Templecombe	Tier 3b	131	82	0.3%
Axbridge	Tier 3b	28	26	0.1%
Berrow & Brean	Tier 3b	83	66	0.3%
Bishop's Lydeard	Tier 3b	350	209	0.8%
Cannington	Tier 3b	98	94	0.4%
Chilcompton	Tier 3b	162	108	0.4%
Cotford St Luke	Tier 3b	72	72	0.3%
Creech St Michael	Tier 3b	267	157	0.6%
Evercreech	Tier 3b	164	132	0.5%
Ilchester	Tier 3b	149	147	0.6%
Martock & Bower Hinton	Tier 3b	275	199	0.8%
Milborne Port	Tier 3b	322	127	0.5%
Nether Stowey	Tier 3b	96	93	0.4%
South Petherton	Tier 3b	343	155	0.6%
Watchet	Tier 3b	109	85	0.3%
Williton	Tier 3b	105	102	0.4%
Wiveliscombe	Tier 3b	230	207	0.8%
Ash	Tier 4	15	7	0.0%
Ashcott	Tier 4	25	25	0.1%
Baltonsborough	Tier 4	99	77	0.3%
Beckington	Tier 4	108	96	0.4%
Blackford	Tier 4	0	0	0.0%
Brent Knoll	Tier 4	45	44	0.2%
North & East Coker	Tier 4	51	38	0.2%
Catcott & Edington	Tier 4	16	12	0.0%
Charlton Horethorne	Tier 4	24	10	0.0%
Chewton Mendip	Tier 4	6	2	0.0%
Chilthorne Domer	Tier 4	5	4	0.0%
Coleford	Tier 4	67	37	0.2%
Combe St Nicholas (inc. Wadeford)	Tier 4	45	24	0.1%
Combwich	Tier 4	4	3	0.0%
Coxley & Upper Coxley & Coxley Wick	Tier 4	85	69	0.3%
Croscombe	Tier 4	11	9	0.0%
Crowcombe	Tier 4	14	6	0.0%
Curry Mallet	Tier 4	21	8	0.0%
Curry Rivel	Tier 4	165	100	0.4%
Ditcheat	Tier 4	10	8	0.0%

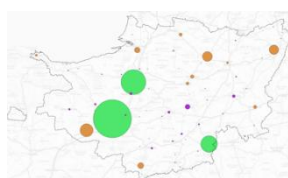
Draycott	Tier 4	32	3	0.0%
East Brent	Tier 4	4	29	0.1%
Hambridge	Tier 4	21	17	0.1%
Haselbury Plucknett	Tier 4	25	7	0.0%
Hatch Beauchamp	Tier 4	8	3	0.0%
Henstridge	Tier 4	126	34	0.1%
High Ham	Tier 4	42	28	0.1%
Hillcommon (inc. Oake)	Tier 4	21	7	0.0%
Hinton St George	Tier 4	16	13	0.1%
Horton (and Broadway)	Tier 4	98	65	0.3%
Huntspill (inc. West Huntspill)	Tier 4	25	21	0.1%
Ilton	Tier 4	111	63	0.3%
Keinton Mandeville	Tier 4	112	95	0.4%
Kilmersdon	Tier 4	16	2	0.0%
Kingston St Mary	Tier 4	24	12	0.0%
Langford Budville	Tier 4	32	11	0.0%
Leigh-On-Mendip	Tier 4	32	23	0.1%
Long Sutton	Tier 4	29	22	0.1%
Lympsham	Tier 4	23	23	0.1%
Mark (and Mark Causeway)	Tier 4	26	23	0.1%
Mells	Tier 4	5	2	0.0%
Merriot	Tier 4	95	81	0.3%
Middlezoy	Tier 4	20	18	0.1%
Milverton	Tier 4	28	4	0.0%
Montacute (inc. East Stoke)	Tier 4	26	20	0.1%
North Cadbury	Tier 4	60	23	0.1%
North Curry	Tier 4	99	72	0.3%
North Newton	Tier 4	19	13	0.1%
Norton St Philip	Tier 4	106	70	0.3%
Norton Sub Hamdon	Tier 4	44	40	0.2%
Nunney & Nunney Catch	Tier 4	87	86	0.3%
Oakhill	Tier 4	48	30	0.1%
Puriton	Tier 4	130	123	0.5%
Queen Camel	Tier 4	26	23	0.1%
Rode	Tier 4	74	54	0.2%
Ruishton (inc. Henlade)	Tier 4	43	36	0.1%
Shepton Beauchamp	Tier 4	41	29	0.1%
Shipham	Tier 4	6	6	0.0%
Spaxton	Tier 4	7	5	0.0%
Stogumber	Tier 4	18	14	0.1%
Stogursey	Tier 4	43	35	0.1%
Stoke St Gregory (inc. Meare Green)	Tier 4	60	52	0.2%
Stoke St Michael	Tier 4	18	10	0.0%
Stoke sub Hamdon	Tier 4	65	59	0.2%
Tatworth (inc. South Chard & Chard Junction)	Tier 4	110	51	0.2%
Tintinhull	Tier 4	15	10	0.0%

Walton	Tier 4	46	37	0.2%
Washford	Tier 4	23	11	0.0%
Weare and Lower Weare	Tier 4	9	9	0.0%
Wedmore	Tier 4	171	167	0.7%
West Chinnock	Tier 4	3	4	0.0%
West Coker	Tier 4	130	103	0.4%
Westbury Sub Mendip	Tier 4	12	5	0.0%
Westonzoyland	Tier 4	81	59	0.2%
Winsham	Tier 4	42	23	0.1%
Wookey	Tier 4	51	27	0.1%
Woolavington	Tier 4	90	62	0.3%
Barrington	Countryside	19	4	0.0%
Barton St David	Countryside	25	10	0.0%
Barwick (inc. Stoford)	Countryside	10	6	0.0%
Batcombe	Countryside	3	0	0.0%
Bawdrip	Countryside	12	2	0.0%
Bicknoller	Countryside	7	6	0.0%
Binegar & Gurney Slade	Countryside	12	7	0.0%
Blagdon Hill	Countryside	37	19	0.1%
Blue Anchor	Countryside	3	2	0.0%
Bradford-on-Tone	Countryside	12	6	0.0%
Brushford	Countryside	30	26	0.1%
Buckland Dinham	Countryside	1	0	0.0%
Butleigh	Countryside	13	2	0.0%
Carhampton	Countryside	52	52	0.2%
Chedzoy	Countryside	14	6	0.0%
Chilton Polden	Countryside	35	29	0.1%
Churchinford	Countryside	70	33	0.1%
Compton Dundon and Dundon	Countryside	62	45	0.2%
Cossington	Countryside	57	10	0.0%
Cross	Countryside	10	8	0.0%
Drayton	Countryside	16	14	0.1%
East Chinnock	Countryside	19	16	0.1%
East Huntspill	Countryside	69	31	0.1%
Easton	Countryside	28	6	0.0%
Edithmead	Countryside	13	13	0.1%
Faulkland	Countryside	36	32	0.1%
Fitzhead	Countryside	3	2	0.0%
Fivehead	Countryside	21	15	0.1%
Galhampton	Countryside			0.0%
Halse	Countryside	12	10	0.0%
Hardington Moor/Hardington Mandeville	Countryside	26	15	0.1%
Holcombe	Countryside	46	9	0.0%
Horsington	Countryside	15	10	0.0%
Kilve	Countryside	2	2	0.0%
Kingsbury Episcopi	Countryside	70	43	0.2%

Kingsdon	Countryside	30	19	0.1%
Lydeard St Lawrence	Countryside	19	11	0.0%
Marston Magna	Countryside	8	3	0.0%
Meare (inc. Oxenpill)	Countryside	91	44	0.2%
Misterton	Countryside	137	83	0.3%
North Perrott	Countryside	11	4	0.0%
Odcombe	Countryside	6	3	0.0%
Othery	Countryside	25	20	0.1%
Pawlett	Countryside	40	39	0.2%
Pilton	Countryside	65	40	0.2%
Priddy	Countryside	16	6	0.0%
Rooks Bridge	Countryside			0.0%
Seavington St Michael	Countryside	25	20	0.1%
Shapwick	Countryside	6	4	0.0%
Sparkford	Countryside	159	145	0.6%
Stoke St Mary	Countryside	18	7	0.0%
Stratton-On-The-Fosse	Countryside	13	10	0.0%
The Charltons - Charlton Adam & Charlton Mackrell	Countryside	54	17	0.1%
The Lydfords	Countryside	6	4	0.0%
Theale	Countryside	32	27	0.1%
Wanstrow	Countryside	10	5	0.0%
West Camel	Countryside	21	9	0.0%
West Pennard	Countryside	15	10	0.0%
West Quantoxhead	Countryside	97	68	0.3%
Witham Friary	Countryside	1	1	0.0%
Wookey Hole	Countryside	19	4	0.0%

It should be noted that there have been other completions over the plan periods and last 10 years in other locations within the open countryside beyond those settlements listed. Over the last 10 years these add up to 1,524 dwellings. The percentages in the above table are based on the total completions including these ones missing from the table, that means the percentages in the table only add up to 93.8%, with the other 6.2% being in the wider open countryside but not in/at one of the listed settlements.

Taking this approach would result in a relatively rurally distributed model of spatial strategy. However, this would be reflective of recent delivery in the real world. This can be aggregated across each tier of the settlement hierarchy, and is presented in summary in Figure 6, below:



6 – Real world delivery	
Tier 1	38%
Tier 2	30%
Tier 3	16%
Tier 4	11%
OC	5%

Figure 6 – Summarised spatial strategy option derived from past delivery

Urban capacity

NPPF policy L1 makes it clear that plans should identify ways of accommodating as much as possible of the development required on previously developed land. It explicitly states that this will be tested robustly when plans are examined.²⁴ Early engagement exercises identified that locally there is an aspiration to take a 'brownfield first' approach and that greater density could be introduced to urban areas, which could help to regenerate centres and address economic and social challenges. Engagement exercises suggested that particular locations for this focus might be Yeovil, Bridgwater, Taunton, Wellington, Frome, Street, Glastonbury, Chard, Ilminster, and Highbridge & Burnham.

A Brownfield-*only* approach (which would seek to avoid greenfield development entirely and focus development on infill, densification, regeneration, redevelopment and reuse within existing settlements) was considered as an option. However, given the scale of housing requirements placed on Somerset, relatively few major brownfield sites being available and ripe for development, and the track record for delivery of these, it was considered to be an unrealistic scenario to consider any further and would not represent a reasonable alternative. Existing Brownfield Registers for Somerset Council²⁵ contain sites adding up to a maximum of 9,539 dwellings (using upper end of the calculated yield range). This would equate to around 12-13% of the overall requirement for the plan period. However, it should be noted that this figure includes numerous sites that are allocated, have planning permission, and in some cases are either already under construction or complete. As such, the true number of dwellings from this source is likely to be significantly less. This is not to say that further brownfield opportunities may well exist.

²⁴ Consultation Draft NPPF (2025) Policy L1, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-proposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>

²⁵ Somerset Council (2025) Brownfield Registers, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/brownfield-register/>

Given NPPF requirements, a brownfield first approach will necessarily be central to any preferred spatial strategy. However, until such time as an urban capacity study or densification study is undertaken for key settlements, it is difficult to understand how this would affect high-level spatial strategy options. Without this level of information it would be difficult to understand the deliverability or impacts of such an option. As such, whilst recognised as important to the spatial strategy and refinement towards a preferred option, it was considered that there was no explicit option to test in this regard just yet.

Employment

NPPF policy HO4 expects large-scale residential and mixed-use development to be directed to locations with sufficient access to services and employment or good access to it by sustainable transport modes.²⁶ NPPF policy E1 expects plans to be built around a clear economic vision and strategy to encourage and enable sustainable economic growth. There should be a particular focus on facilitating the needs of a modern economy, and attention paid to addressing potential barriers to investment, including in relation to infrastructure, services, housing and poor environment.²⁷

Proximity to employment opportunities was identified as a critical consideration for determining the distribution of housing growth. It is important to note, that whilst this has historically been a key focus for spatial strategy optioneering, the significant shift to home working and hybrid working arrangements in some sectors, means that this may not be quite as much of a focus as previously.²⁸ Despite this, the majority of sectors still have some fixed place of work, with an estimated 70+% of all businesses still working from a designated workspace.²⁹ As such, commuting trips, aligning housing and employment opportunities and reducing the need to travel will continue to play an important role and does require some attention.

The starting point was to map out existing job numbers. This was achieved by taking the Business Register Employment Survey (BRES) data³⁰ and mapping the total persons employed against the relevant Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) as shown in figure 7, below. Total persons employed was taken to be a proxy for numbers of jobs within that LSOA. This is acknowledged as a fairly crude measurement, but was intended to get a high-level view of the locations where the most jobs are likely located.

²⁶ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy HO4

²⁷ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy E1

²⁸ Hardisty Jones for Somerset Council (2025), Somerset Economic Development Needs Assessment: Final Report, pp.44-45, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/evidence-base/>

²⁹ Hardisty Jones for Somerset Council (2025), Somerset Economic Development Needs Assessment: Final Report, Appendix 5, pp.3-4, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/evidence-base/>

³⁰ NOMIS (2025) Business Register and Employment Survey : open access, available at <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/newbres6pub>

Number of jobs by Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)

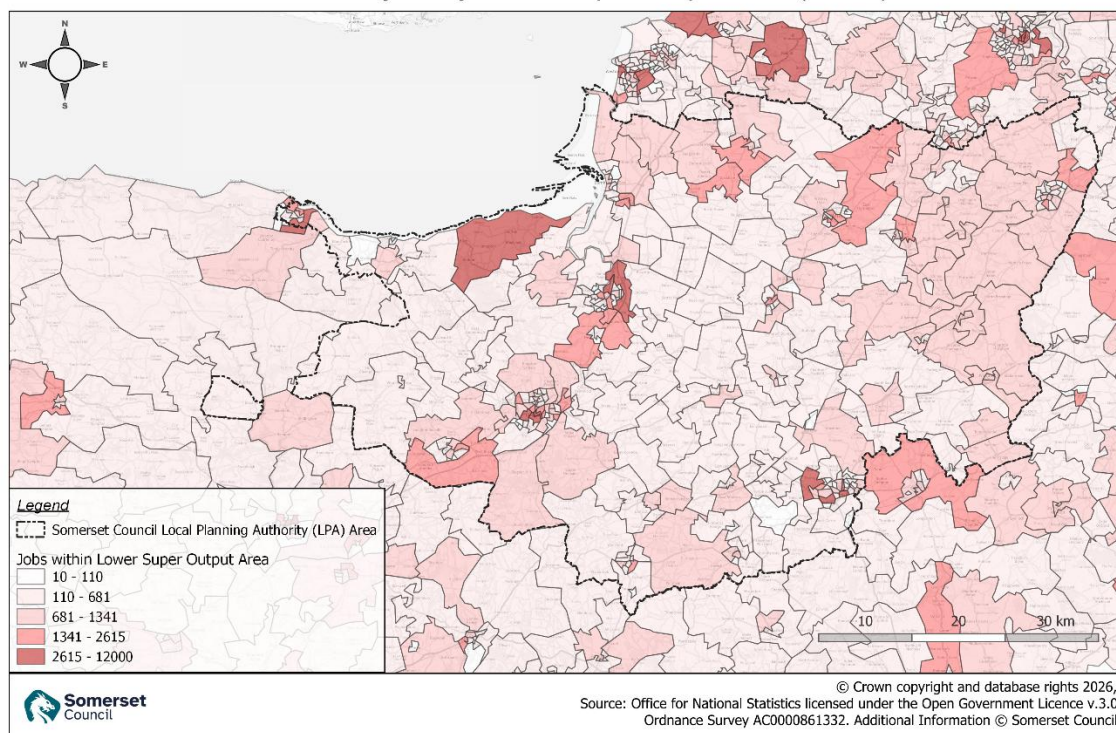


Figure 7 - Number of jobs by Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) from the Business Register Employment Survey

The Department for Transport state that 5 miles (8 km) is “an achievable distance to cycle for most people”³¹. However, bearing in mind that the BRES data above is presented on an LSOA level, and some LSOAs in Somerset are very large, it seemed reasonable to apply a slightly smaller distance when considering the relationship with access to these jobs. 5 km was therefore taken as a reasonable distance that people may potentially cycle.

5 km buffers were mapped for each settlement based on the settlement centroid location used in the Settlement Role and Function Study work. This did not plot precise 5 km isochrones according to specific walking/cycling routes, but instead plotted 5 km ‘as the crow flies’ buffer zones to establish broad proximity. The buffer for each settlement overlapped with multiple different LSOAs. In each case, the total number of persons employed for each LSOA which were overlapped, were then added together to give a potential number of jobs accessible within 5km of development at a given settlement.

The BRES data used does not identify the exact location of the jobs within a given LSOA. As such, in theory the job numbers within an LSOA could all be at the opposite end of the LSOA to that overlapping the settlement 5 km buffer. Furthermore, given the high level buffer approach used it may be that there is realistically no (or at least only very convoluted routes) to reach them. As such, this is intended as a proxy measure only, although the use of a 5 km rather than 5 mile

³¹ DfT (2020) Cycle Infrastructure Design: Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20, p.16, available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/951074/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-1-20.pdf.

buffer adds a level of conservatism here to allow for this. The approach provides more accurate outputs for more densely populated areas as the LSOAs are smaller, but this is also where most jobs are located within or on the edge of. Access to the relevant jobs may still require improvement from a settlement but this may be eminently more achievable than from settlements further away.

Following the above approach, settlements were then split into five bands based on the number of jobs they potentially had access to. These bands were ‘settlement hierarchy blind’ in that it did not matter whether a settlement was in tier 1 or tier 4 of the proposed hierarchy, so long as it was within 5 km of an LSOA with a certain number of jobs. Each band was then ascribed a reasonable percentage of the overall growth, with the resulting number of homes split evenly across the number of settlements in the band:

- ≥25,000 jobs within 5 km = 60% (split across 20 settlements)
- 15,000 to <25,000 jobs within 5 km = 25% (split across 20 settlements)
- 10,000 to <15,000 jobs within 5 km = 14% (split across 36 settlements)
- 5,000 to <10,000 jobs within 5 km = 1% (split across 77 settlements)
- <5,000 jobs within 5 km = 0% (split across 23 settlements)

The bands and percentages used in the above were chosen as a reasonable way to reflect a focus on access to significant numbers and choice in job opportunities. It allowed for a clear differential to be made between locations with the greatest likelihood of access to the highest numbers of jobs, and areas with access to the least jobs.

In this scenario, a total of 85% of housing growth would be accommodated in locations with potential access to at least 15,000 jobs within 5 km. Conversely, just 3% of growth would be accommodated in locations with less than 10,000 jobs within 5 km.

This approach assumed 60% of housing growth would be accommodated within the top tier, similar to the existing Sedgemoor spatial strategy. However, in this scenario, those 45,228 homes would be split out across many more settlements (including very small existing settlements) which are within 5 km of the highest number of jobs. Below this, percentages were determined by ensuring higher tiers had a higher percentage, but also ensuring that there was a clear differential in numbers of dwellings that would be required on a per settlement basis between tiers.

Table 14 below shows how the housing requirement would be distributed between settlements in reflection of the proximity to jobs bands, and in reflection of the settlement hierarchy.

Table 14 - Tables identifying how the housing requirement could be distributed in relation to proximity to jobs

Settlement hierarchy			Access to jobs bands		
	Number	%		Number	%
Tier 1	6,784	9%	≥25,000 jobs within 5 km	45,228	60%
Tier 2	3,033	4%	15,000 to <25,000 jobs within 5 km	18,845	25%
Tier 3	9,007	12%	10,000 to <15,000 jobs within 5 km	10,553	14%

Tier 4	32,150	43%	5,000 to <10,000 jobs within 5 km	754	1%
Open Countryside	24,405	32%	<5,000 jobs within 5 km	0	0%

Whilst this measure only considers existing jobs, the Somerset Economic Prosperity Strategy focuses principally on building on our distinctive assets and opportunities for economic transformation.³² These tend to be focused around the main settlements

- Clean energy innovation - Bridgwater - Hinkley – Gravity
- Aerospace and defence – Yeovil
- Digital and data - Taunton - Bridgwater - Gravity

The need for new employment sites, and how these and other opportunities already in the system might affect things, will be considered. However, considering that the ‘access to jobs bands’ used in the above approach are at 5,000 job intervals, in the majority of cases, only very large new employment development in an LSOA already relatively close to the interval boundary could definitely shift a location into a higher band. As an example, based upon Savills’ industrial/logistics research which gives a benchmark of 36 m² per manufacturing employee and 79 m² per warehousing employee³³, an industrial/manufacturing B2 development would need to be 180,000 sqm to deliver 5,000 jobs, which would be a very large multi-unit industrial estate. A warehousing distribution development would need to be 395,000 sqm, which would be among the largest warehouse footprints in the UK.

As such, the approach based on location of existing jobs is likely a robust proxy to use.

This can be aggregated across each tier of the settlement hierarchy, and is presented in summary in Figure 8, below:

³² Somerset Council (2025) Somerset Economic Prosperity Strategy 2025-2045, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/business-economy-and-licences/somerset-economic-prosperity-strategy-2025-2045/>

³³ Savills (2025) Impact on the industrial and logistics sector, available at https://www.savills.co.uk/research_articles/229130/380369-0

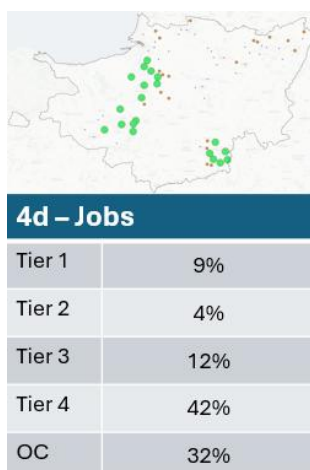


Figure 8 - Summarised spatial strategy option derived from job opportunities

Infrastructure capacity

NPPF policy HO4 expects large scale residential and mixed use developments to be located in places capable of being supported by necessary infrastructure and facilities by sustainable transport. It refers to taking advantage of any opportunities presented by existing or planned infrastructure investment, as well as supporting sustainable communities with sufficient access to services.³⁴

Infrastructure capacity repeatedly came out as a critical issue for local communities during early engagement. This related to health, education, public transport and highways infrastructure in particular. In addition to this, the Council's Energy Investment Plan makes it clear that electricity grid capacity is a critical issue in Somerset for both demand and generation projects, and water infrastructure is an important consideration in Somerset.

Communities voiced a keenness to accommodate new development in locations which maximise use of existing infrastructure, accounting for existing capacity and with ability to expand. However, whilst data on where existing infrastructure is located is easy to come by, data on capacity is more complex. Whilst information is regularly published about the capacity of infrastructure (such as school place capacity, patients per doctor capacity of GP surgeries, headroom capacity of grid sub-stations), infrastructure providers do not recommend using such information to understand where capacity exists. Instead they recommend that it is determined at the point in time that development is coming forward. Furthermore, some infrastructure providers (e.g. electricity grid and water) are expected to ensure their plans for increasing the capacity of their services meets the demand from new development.

Given that it is difficult to understand at a strategic level where infrastructure capacity exists, it was considered that for many infrastructure types, these issues would need to be dealt with as part of site assessments and refinement of potential options.

³⁴ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy HO4

However, in relation to public transport, it was considered that this could and should be a critical consideration in determining the appropriate spatial strategy. This is dealt with in further detail under *Transport and connectivity*, below.

Settlement revival

NPPF policy HO6 expects plans to allocate sites which will support and enhance the vitality of rural communities and enable villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. NPPF policy E1 explicitly states that plans should be built on a clear economic vision to encourage sustainable economic growth in both urban and rural areas. However, NPPF policy TR1 also makes it clear that a vision-led approach to transport planning, which takes account of opportunities for prioritising and maximising sustainable movement across the area is key³⁵, and policies S1 and N1 require plans to avoid and minimise impacts upon areas or assets of particular importance, which tend to be more prevalent in rural areas.³⁶

Early engagement identified that rural settlements across Somerset require some careful consideration. Whilst the landscapes and natural environments within which these settlements sit is important - and they are often home to important heritage assets - the provision of infrastructure is frequently poor and appears to be declining. The limited availability of affordable housing for younger families in rural areas, and other factors such as retirement to rural areas from other parts of Somerset and the wider country, further reduce and change demand for local infrastructure, exacerbating this trend. Rural isolation is a major issue in Somerset, both in terms of access to services and facilities and also social, economic and some environmental opportunities. Rural isolation is a major contributor to public health concerns. Most participants in early engagement sessions acknowledged that rural settlements could contribute to new homes in a sensitive and proportionate manner, with many people suggesting a pro-rata uplift such as 10%. High quality homes that could help to provide balanced communities and support local shops and services were seen as a way to ensure positive outcomes for rural communities from new development helping to tackle rural isolation by bringing more balanced populations, new services and facilities and helping to support retention of existing.

The idea of requiring a 10% increase in dwelling numbers for every settlement was explored in more detail. In order to do this, the number of existing dwellings in a settlement was taken from the Settlement Role and Function Study. This used Census data on dwelling numbers per LSOA or OA (depending upon the scale and fit of settlement to the geography) and attributed them to specific settlements.³⁷ For further information see the Settlement Role and Function Study. A 10% increase figure was then calculated from this for each settlement. However, this amounted to a total of just 23,633 dwellings over the 20 year plan period, some 51,747 dwellings

³⁵ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy TR1

³⁶ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policies S1 and N1

³⁷ ONS (2023) Census 2021: Number of Dwellings, available at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/RM204/editions/2021/versions/1>

short of the anticipated target. Therefore this 10% option was not considered to be a reasonable approach to distributing growth.

However, keeping with the premise behind the original intent, sensitivity testing was undertaken to arrive at a flat percentage increase that could be applied to each and every settlement in order to arrive at around the 20 year overall target. This identified that if every settlement had the same % increase in dwelling numbers, then the number of dwellings in every settlement in Somerset would need to be expanded by 32% in order to achieve the 20 year housing target. Table 15, below provides a summary of this sensitivity testing:

Table 15 - Sensitivity testing to establish what level of flat percentage uplift on settlement dwelling numbers would be required to achieve housing requirements

% increase in housing stock per settlement					
10%	20%	30%	31%	32%	35%
23,633	47,266	70,899	73,262	75,626	82,716

Increasing the number of dwellings in *every* settlement by 32% would result in some particularly significant impacts. Some settlements are more constrained by a variety of factors than others. However, the approach would not take account of this in any way, with some heavily constrained and extremely rural settlements being required to take significantly more new homes than they have historically ever done. Equally, some strategically well-served settlements would more easily be able to accommodate more than this level of growth but would only be required to take just a fraction this. These perverse implications were felt to be unreasonable and as such this option was not taken forward as a core option.

In light of the above, an alternative approach was considered, which aligned with the premise behind the initial proposal for a 10% increase in dwelling numbers, but which accounted for the key differences in settlement role and function. Table 16 sets out the percentage increases in dwelling numbers applied in any given settlement, for each tier of the settlement hierarchy:

Table 16 - An approach to percentage growth in settlement dwelling numbers depending upon tier in the settlement hierarchy

	Percentage growth in dwelling numbers for settlements in relevant tier
Tier 1	45%
Tier 2	35%
Tier 3	25%
Tier 4	15%
Open Countryside	5%

This approach would result in rural settlements (including those considered as part of the open countryside) taking some housing growth. However, this would be limited, with the higher tiers increasing dwelling numbers more significantly accounting for their role and function. The above options can be translated across to a distribution

of the overall housing numbers by settlement hierarchy. Figure 9 summarises and presents this:

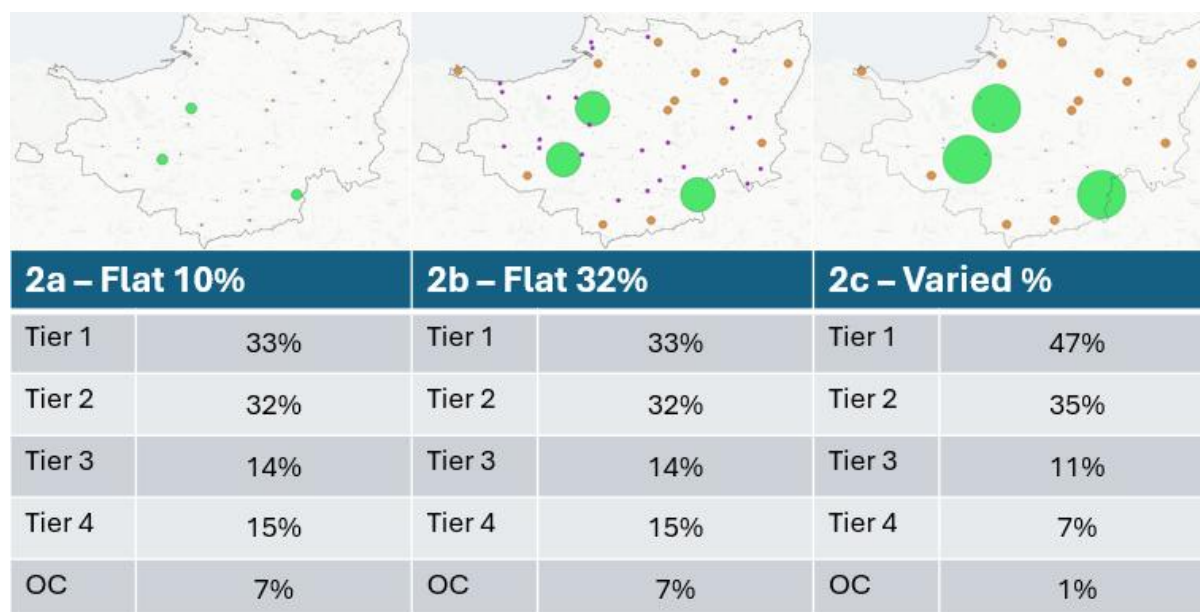


Figure 9 - Spatial strategy options derived from percentage uplift of settlement dwelling numbers

In addition to the above, officers established long-list options which would see more significant dispersal of housing requirements across rural areas. These were labelled as ‘Some’, ‘Increased’ and ‘Further’ dispersal options, with each scenario reflecting a less centralised approach. ‘Some’ dispersal would still see some 45% of growth accommodated in tier 1 and 2 settlements, but this is significantly less than other identified options. ‘Increased’ dispersal would see the proportion of growth accommodated in tier 1 and 2 settlements reduced to just 35%, with tier 3 and 4 settlements picking up the slack. ‘Further dispersal would see the proportion accommodated in tier 1 and 2 settlements reduced further to 20%, with tier 3 and 4 settlements again picking up this slack. In all cases, the proportion to be delivered in open countryside settlements stays at 10%. The level of housing requirement attributed to individual tier 3 and 4 settlements would be significant. In some extreme cases (assuming an equal share of a tier’s housing requirement is shared between all settlements in that tier), then this could result in a 172% increase in dwelling numbers for some settlements where they have a relatively small number of homes already, but play a local role and function (tier 4). In some ways this would effectively amount to a new settlement. Whilst this might potentially be justifiable in certain settlements, with the right level of investment in services and facilities, improved infrastructure and connectivity, it would not be justifiable for all. Furthermore, it would fail to focus development where existing infrastructure and job opportunities are located and not enable people to use existing public transport corridors due to poor rural connectivity. These rural dispersal options are summarised and presented in Figure 10, below:

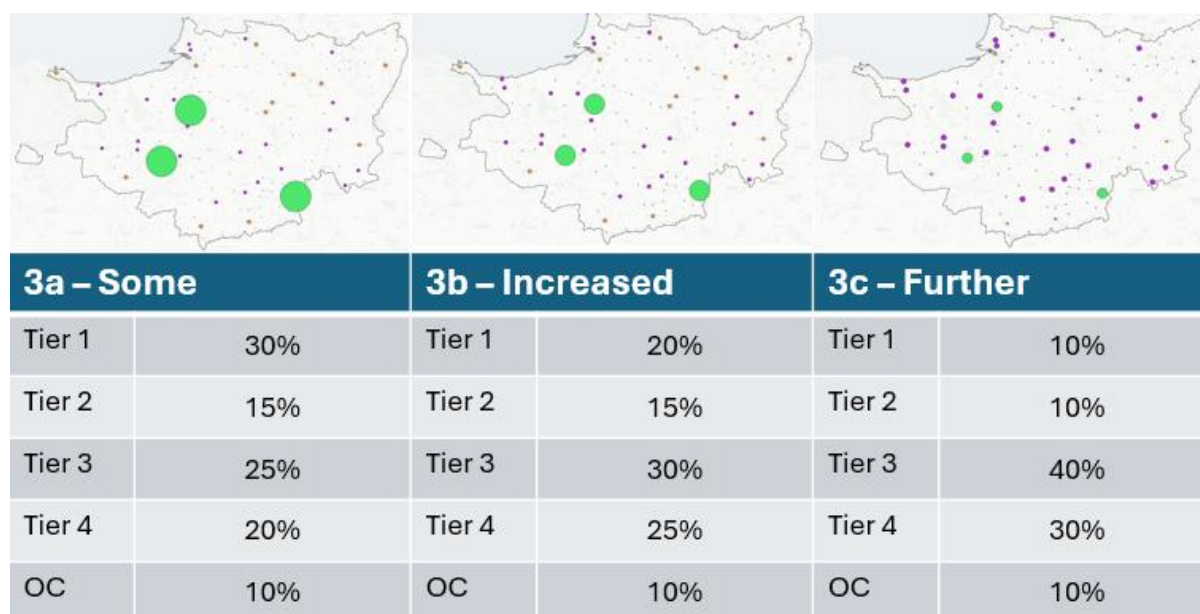


Figure 10 - Spatial strategy options derived from increasing levels of rural dispersal

Following discussion, it was considered that none of these long-list options would be reasonable and as such they were not taken forward for further consideration. Instead, the Varied % option and Real World Roll Forward option (2c, and 6, both explained above) were felt to more reasonably reflect a potential and more realistic rural dispersal scenarios for further review.

New communities / settlements

NPPF Policy HO4 explicitly mentions new settlements as an option to be considered when identifying suitable locations for large scale residential and mixed use development.³⁸ NPPF policy PM1 suggests that Spatial Development Strategies will play an important role in this.³⁹

Early engagement identified some support for new communities, with the idea that one or two significant new communities could potentially help in meeting the housing requirements, with a reduced impact on existing communities and already stretched infrastructure. It was suggested that such new communities would need to be centred around existing infrastructure with some capacity, proximity to jobs and in particular location along the rail network was highlighted as an opportunity.

Given the scale of the housing challenge, it is tempting to assume that new communities could be a part of the solution. However, it is important to recognise the significant lead-in times required for new settlement type proposals. Looking at relevant examples of such from across the country, these kinds of proposals tend to take 15-20 years to move from concept into delivery and first homes being occupied, and longer-still before the full range of services and facilities they will be reliant upon are delivered. The NPPF (2024) states that “*where larger scale developments such*

³⁸ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy HO4

³⁹ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy PM1

*as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns form part of the strategy for the area, policies should be set within a vision that looks further ahead (at least 30 years), to take into account the likely timescale for delivery*⁴⁰ (although this phrasing is not carried forward in the 2025 consultation draft NPPF). As such, if it were to be considered that new communities could play a role in the longer-term strategy for Somerset, then it would be important for the new Local Plan to address this. However, the delivery timescales involved mean that it is likely that they would generally only contribute limited delivery within the plan period.

Two new settlement related spatial strategy options were initially put forward for consideration within the long-list of options. Option 5a considered distributing 10% of the overall housing requirement away from Tier 1 settlements, and instead delivering this within a new settlement(s). Option 5b considered building on the Public Transport Corridors option (see below), by accommodating a new settlement within one of these corridors. However, it was not at this stage clear what the locational options for a new settlement would be in either of these scenarios, and it was not considered possible or appropriate to spatially map such an approach. So, whilst the option to accommodate some growth within new settlements remained on the table to be considered further, it was not considered to be definable or core at this stage.

If it is considered necessary or preferable to consider new settlements longer-term, then the plan will likely need to establish selection criteria and areas of search at least. This can help to define such a spatial strategy option if appropriate further down the line. Given that the NPPF expects Spatial Development Strategies (SDSs) to identify broad locations for strategic development including new settlements, there may be a potential relationship to consider here. Identifying some local criteria to help guide potential options should they be necessary, could be helpful to ensure that any SDS work on the matter can take account of how potential new settlements might fit with the Somerset spatial strategy.

Climate change, flood risk and coastal change

NPPF policy S1 clearly states mitigation of climate change and adaptation to its effects as a key element of planning positively for future growth and change.⁴¹ NPPF policy CC1 expects plans to take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change. It explicitly states that plans should do this by proposing spatial strategies which contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and which avoid increased vulnerability and improve resilience to effects of climate change.⁴² NPPF policy F2 requires plans to take a risk-based approach when identifying suitable locations for development, by applying the sequential (and where appropriate) exception tests.⁴³ NPPF policy F3 expects plans to take account of

⁴⁰ NPPF (2024), paragraph 22

⁴¹ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy S1

⁴² Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy CC1

⁴³ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy F2

coastal change including National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping, and avoid inappropriate development in vulnerable coastal areas.⁴⁴

In relation to overarching spatial strategy, mitigation of climate change will predominantly be driven by location of development and ability to reduce the need to travel and travel by sustainable modes. As such, this aspect is dealt with more appropriately under the transport and connectivity issue, further below, and this section deals predominantly with the adaptation angle.

Climate change, flood risk and coastal change are fundamental issues that affect the future of Somerset, not least due to the nature of the coastline, low-lying topography of the Levels and Moors, and the numerous rivers and streams which cover Somerset. Somerset is already significantly affected by flood risk from numerous sources, with fluvial (river and sea), and pluvial (surface water) sources being of particular concern. Climate change has the potential to significantly increase the areas affected by this risk and the severity of flooding in those areas already at risk. This has the potential to result in major impacts for new development in the plan area, unless development is directed to locations of lower risk.

The Met Office projects that sea levels along the Bristol Channel coast could rise by 28-47 cm by the 2050s, and 46-90 cm by the 2080s compared to a 1981-2000 baseline position.⁴⁵ However, this would be in the context of much greater sea level rises likely being locked in over the longer term should climate tipping points be exceeded. Some coastlines are protected through existing coastal defences.

In addition to this, the Met Office projects that winter precipitation rates in Somerset could increase by 4-27% (according to median and upper estimates) depending on the level of global warming (1.5C, 2C, or 4C) when compared to a 1981-2000 baseline position.⁴⁶

The NPPF requires inappropriate development (as considered against the flood risk vulnerability classifications in Annex 3 of the NPPF (2024)⁴⁷) to be directed away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Development should only be allowed in such areas where it is necessary and adequately justified in relation to application of the sequential test and can demonstrate that it can be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Strategic policies should be informed by a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.⁴⁸ Flood risk can be mitigated in some cases where justified in line with the above. In particular, strategic mitigation schemes to protect existing urban areas are more likely to exist and/or be developed. However, in the face of rising sea levels and increasing levels of flood risk from all sources, these defences would need to be reviewed and potentially increased in height and other attributes to remain functional and relevant, at

⁴⁴ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy F3

⁴⁵ Met Office (2024) Change in Sea Level for Somerset, available at <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/506ff7d53c884badb0d8fd36d6280a91>

⁴⁶ Met Office (2024) Winter Precipitation Change Projections (Local Authority) v1, available at https://climatedataportal.metoffice.gov.uk/datasets/364647e6397f4016a21bd086507d50d7_17/explor

^e

⁴⁷ NPPF (2024) Annex 3

⁴⁸ NPPF (2024) paragraphs 170-172.

significant cost. Adding further development to these locations increases the number of people and the social and economic assets at risk should necessary infrastructure maintenance and improvements not keep pace with climate change. A reasonable option to consider would be taking a particularly precautionary approach, and assuming that these areas are unlikely to be available to contribute towards meeting new growth targets. Fluvial (rivers and sea) risk is of paramount importance here as this is so widespread. Whilst pluvial (surface water), groundwater and reservoir flood risk are clearly of relevance in Somerset, they affect more limited areas and generally are more detailed and locationally specific constraints. As such, for spatial strategy purposes, it is reasonable to focus on the risk associated principally with fluvial flood risk and consider other sources in more detail in assessing site suitability.

The new Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Somerset⁴⁹ provides the most accurate and up to date mapping of Flood Zones 2 and 3. Most settlements in Somerset have some level of fluvial flood risk associated with them as most settlements tend to have been established and grown along a watercourse of some description, or at least nearby. In addition to this, due to the topography of Somerset, many settlements are also affected by this flood risk in terms of their connectivity. Some settlements may be slightly elevated above the worst risk themselves, but in extreme events become cut-off by surrounding flooding of low-lying land. Bearing this in mind, it was considered important to establish an approach that would be able to reflect the potential implications of flood risk to development potential going forward.

The coastline itself is covered by the North Devon and Somerset Shoreline Management Plan which provides a policy framework to address risks associated with coastal evolution in a sustainable manner with respect to people and the developed, historic and natural environment.⁵⁰ The coastline is split into 'policy units' with each unit ascribed one of four policy approaches ('hold the existing defence line'; 'advance the existing defence line'; 'managed realignment'; or 'no active intervention') for specific time periods (epochs). In addition to this, the Environment Agency has recently published the National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping.⁵¹ This shows projected areas at risk from erosion, and presents erosion risk extents for:

- Two periods: medium term (up to 2055) and long term (up to 2105);
- Two management scenarios: with Shoreline Management Plans delivered, and with No Future Intervention (NFI).

⁴⁹ JBA Consulting on behalf of Somerset Council (2026), Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/evidence-gathering-and-early-engagement/>

⁵⁰ Halcrow (on behalf of the North Devon and Somerset Coastal Advisory Group (2010) Shoreline Management Plan Review (SMP2) Hartland Point to Anchor Head, available at <https://southwest.coastalmonitoring.org/projects/shoreline-management-plans/ndascag-smp2/>

⁵¹ Environment Agency (2025) National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping (NCERM) – National 2024, available at <https://environment.data.gov.uk/dataset/9fede91f-5acd-4fd2-9bd8-98153fa3c2ff>

- Three climate scenarios: Present Day climate (2020), Higher Central allowance and Upper End allowance. The two allowances use sea level rise data from UKCP18 RCP8.5 70th and 95th percentiles respectively.

The greatest extent of coastal erosion potential is presented by the long term (2105) No Future Intervention scenario assuming Upper End allowance for climate impacts.

The NCERM data also includes data on ground instability (geologically complex cliffs where land has previously experienced ground movement) and instability recession (having the potential risk of future movement in the next 100 years).

It is reasonable to take the greatest extent of coastal erosion potential and instability recession as indicative areas where development should be avoided. These areas do overlap with some of our coastal settlements and surrounding land that might otherwise be targeted for future development. It is therefore reasonable to consider how this might affect the amount of future development that these affected settlements might be able to accommodate.

There are numerous other potential impacts of climate change which will be important for Somerset, particularly including overheating risk (see the Climate and Energy Topic Paper for more on these). However, these are less critically related to spatial strategy optioneering and more appropriate to be dealt with as we move into more detail on sites and policies.

Taking into account all of the above, it was concluded that a spatial strategy option should be developed which would avoid significant growth in the areas at greatest risk of impacts from climate change, focusing on fluvial flood risk and coastal change elements as key indicators of this.

In order to reflect this, it was decided to explore how much of a settlement and surrounding land (which might become relevant for accommodating growth attributed to it by the spatial strategy scenario) would be affected by these constraints. Use of settlement limits (as defined in existing plans) was considered. However, only selected settlements in the former Taunton Deane, South Somerset, Sedgemoor and Mendip areas had settlement limits in adopted Plans. West Somerset settlements would therefore not be represented, alongside numerous others considered by the Settlement Role and Function Study across Somerset as a whole. Under Policy S2 of the consultation draft NPPF (2025) local plans are expected to identify settlement boundaries (or establish clear criteria for identifying settlement extents). However, work to consider the new Plan's approach to settlement limits has not yet begun.⁵² In light of this, it was considered whether to simply supplement the existing settlement limits with OS Built Up Areas⁵³ just for those settlements missing policy definition. However, this was considered to complicate matters. Instead, it was decided to use a common approach of OS Built Up Areas for all settlements. Some smaller settlements did not have OS Built Up Areas mapped either. In this situation a manual check was completed to review potential relevance of constraints. Some settlements

⁵² Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy S2

⁵³ Ordnance Survey (2025), OS Built Up Areas, available at <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/7735dc84-2afd-46c2-be4e-f7cd1347168e/os-open-built-up-areas>

were effectively covered by numerous OS Built Up Areas. In this situation these were joined together to arrive at a reasonable approximation of the relevant settlement.

These areas were then buffered by 200m to provide an indicative growth area around settlements. This created a settlement polygon representative of the indicative area within which any distributed housing growth might potentially need to be accommodated. As an example, Figure 11, below shows the OS Built Up Area for Watchet in green, with the 200m buffer in grey.

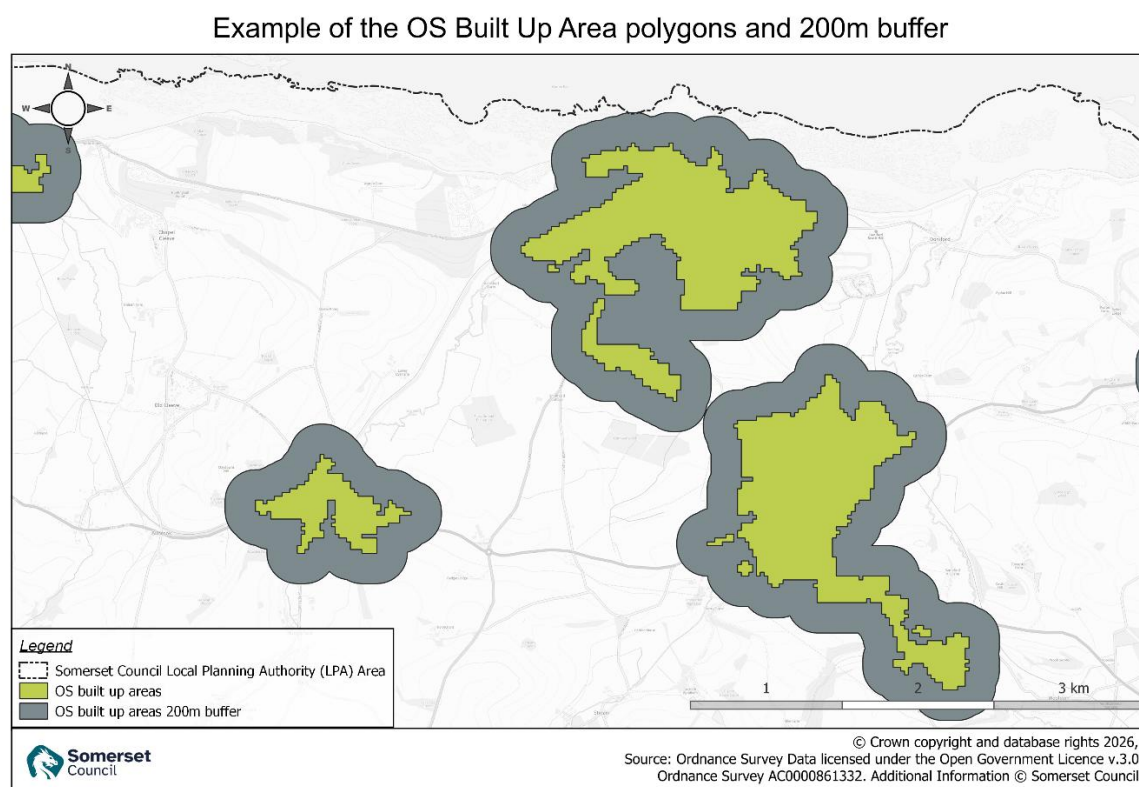


Figure 11 - Example of the OS Built Up Area polygons and 200m buffer

The following constraints were then overlaid and used to clip the buffered polygon. Figure 12, below shows the application of these constraints over the top of the buffered OS Built Up Area for Watchet:

- NCERM Ground Instability Zone
- NCERM Ground Instability Recession
- NCERM NFI 2055 95CC (Coastal erosion under Medium Term Upper End Climate Change Projections)
- NCERM NFI 2105 95CC (Coastal erosion under Long Term Upper End Climate Change Projections)
- SFRA Level 1 Flood Zone 2
- SFRA Level 1 Flood Zone 3

Example of the selected climate risk layers overlapping the buffered OS Built Up Areas

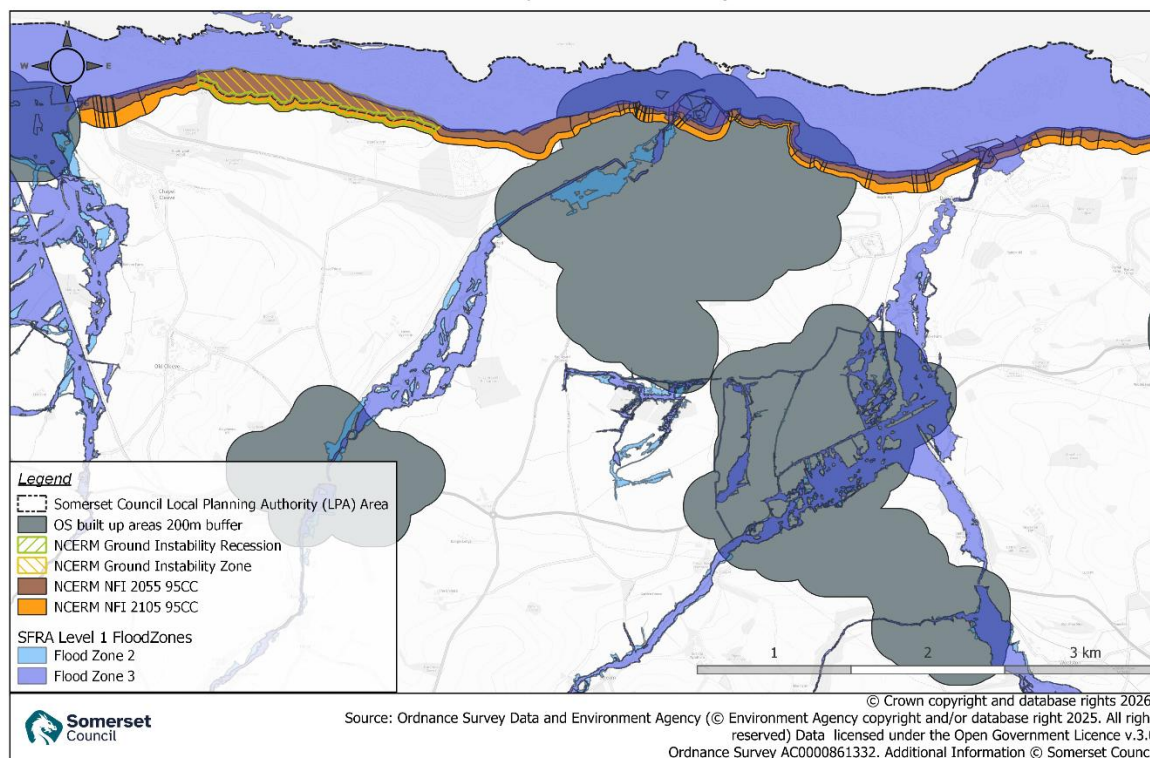


Figure 12 - Example of the selected climate risk layers overlapping the buffered OS Built Up Areas

The area of the buffered polygon and the clipped polygon were then compared. Each settlement started in the tier of the settlement hierarchy as set out by the Settlement Role and Function Study (see above). If less than 50% of the original polygon area was left (i.e. the settlement was significantly affected by the climate risks), then the settlement dropped by 2 tiers. If between 50% and 80% was left then the settlement dropped by 1 tier. If more than 80% of the original polygon area was left then it retained its tier status as per the Settlement Role & Function Study. However, despite the above, if the settlement would end up becoming an island surrounded by the above climate risks, then this also dropped the settlement by 1 tier. Following this exercise, the overall plan growth was then distributed across the settlements in each of the updated tiers. To do this, the percentage distributed to each tier was taken from the aggregated roll forward option (see above), but applied to the updated list of settlements in each. Table 17, below identifies how this methodology affected each settlement. Settlements highlighted in red dropped down tiers of the hierarchy as a result.

Table 17 - Table setting out how settlements are affected by the selected climate risks and the resulting Climate scenario settlement tier

Settlement	Settlement Role & Function Study Tier	% of area left after removing areas at highest climate risk	Action	Does application of climate factors leave the settlement surrounded by risk areas?	Additional action	Climate scenario settlement tier
Bridgwater	Tier 1	36%	Drop by 2 tiers			Tier 3
Taunton	Tier 1	85%				Tier 1
Yeovil	Tier 1	95%				Tier 1
Chard	Tier 2	97%				Tier 2
Cheddar	Tier 2	86%				Tier 2
Crewkerne	Tier 2	97%				Tier 2
Frome	Tier 2	94%				Tier 2
Glastonbury	Tier 2	77%	Drop by 1 tier			Tier 3
Highbridge & Burnham (inc. Burnham Marine)	Tier 2	9%	Drop by 2 tiers			Tier 4
Minehead & Alcombe	Tier 2	66%	Drop by 1 tier			Tier 3
Shepton Mallet	Tier 2	97%				Tier 2
Street	Tier 2	92%				Tier 2
Wellington	Tier 2	93%				Tier 2
Wells	Tier 2	83%				Tier 2
Wincanton (inc. Bayford)	Tier 2	89%				Tier 2
Ansford & Castle Cary	Tier 3a	100%				Tier 3
Bruton & Pitcombe	Tier 3a	94%				Tier 3
Ilminster	Tier 3a	83%				Tier 3
Langport & Huish Episcopi	Tier 3a	70%	Drop by 1 tier			Tier 4
North Petherton	Tier 3a	91%				Tier 3
Somerton	Tier 3a	94%				Tier 3
Abbas & Templecombe	Tier 3b	100%				Tier 3
Axbridge	Tier 3b	77%	Drop by 1 tier			Tier 4
Berrow & Brean	Tier 3b	24%	Drop by 2 tiers	Yes	Drop by 1 tier	Countryside
Bishop's Lydeard	Tier 3b	87%				Tier 3
Cannington	Tier 3b	73%	Drop by 1 tier			Tier 4
Chilcompton	Tier 3b	97%				Tier 3
Cotford St Luke	Tier 3b	79%	Drop by 1 tier			Tier 4

Settlement	Settlement Role & Function Study Tier	% of area left after removing areas at highest climate risk	Action	Does application of climate factors leave the settlement surrounded by risk areas?	Additional action	Climate scenario settlement tier
Creech St Michael	Tier 3b	70%	Drop by 1 tier			Tier 4
Evercreech	Tier 3b	99%				Tier 3
Ilchester	Tier 3b	58%	Drop by 1 tier			Tier 4
Martock & Bower Hinton	Tier 3b	92%				Tier 3
Milborne Port	Tier 3b	95%				Tier 3
Nether Stowey	Tier 3b	100%				Tier 3
South Petherton	Tier 3b	96%				Tier 3
Watchet	Tier 3b	78%	Drop by 1 tier			Tier 4
Williton	Tier 3b	78%	Drop by 1 tier			Tier 4
Wiveliscombe	Tier 3b	100%				Tier 3
Ash	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Ashcott	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Baltonsborough	Tier 4	90%				Tier 4
Beckington	Tier 4	99%				Tier 4
Blackford	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Brent Knoll	Tier 4	28%	Drop by 2 tiers			Countryside
North & East Coker	Tier 4	94%				Tier 4
Catcott & Edington	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Charlton Horethorne	Tier 4	96%				Tier 4
Chewton Mendip	Tier 4	*				Tier 4
Chilthorne Domer	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Coleford	Tier 4	96%				Tier 4
Combe St Nicholas (inc. Wadeford)	Tier 4	97%				Tier 4
Combwich	Tier 4	32%	Drop by 2 tiers			Countryside
Coxley & Upper Coxley & Coxley Wick	Tier 4	90%				Tier 4
Croscombe	Tier 4	94%				Tier 4
Crowcombe	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Curry Mallet	Tier 4	*				Tier 4
Curry Rivel	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Ditcheat	Tier 4	99%				Tier 4
Draycott	Tier 4	98%				Tier 4

Settlement	Settlement Role & Function Study Tier	% of area left after removing areas at highest climate risk	Action	Does application of climate factors leave the settlement surrounded by risk areas?	Additional action	Climate scenario settlement tier
East Brent	Tier 4	17%	Drop by 2 tiers			Countryside
Hambridge	Tier 4	*				Tier 4
Haselbury Plucknett	Tier 4	97%				Tier 4
Hatch Beauchamp	Tier 4	91%				Tier 4
Henstridge	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
High Ham	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Hillcommon (inc. Oake)	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Hinton St George	Tier 4	99%				Tier 4
Horton (and Broadway)	Tier 4	89%				Tier 4
Huntspill (inc. West Huntspill)	Tier 4	0%	Drop by 2 tiers			Countryside
Ilton	Tier 4	95%				Tier 4
Keinton Mandeville	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Kilmersdon	Tier 4	*				Tier 4
Kingston St Mary	Tier 4	96%				Tier 4
Langford Budville	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Leigh-On-Mendip	Tier 4	*				Tier 4
Long Sutton	Tier 4	95%				Tier 4
Lympsham	Tier 4	0%	Drop by 2 tiers			Countryside
Mark (and Mark Causeway)	Tier 4	46%	Drop by 2 tiers			Countryside
Mells	Tier 4	93%				Tier 4
Merriot	Tier 4	93%				Tier 4
Middlezoy	Tier 4	81%		Yes	Drop by 1 tier	Countryside
Milverton	Tier 4	94%				Tier 4
Montacute (inc. East Stoke)	Tier 4	97%				Tier 4
North Cadbury	Tier 4	95%				Tier 4
North Curry	Tier 4	92%				Tier 4
North Newton	Tier 4	84%				Tier 4
Norton St Philip	Tier 4	99%				Tier 4
Norton Sub Hamdon	Tier 4	93%				Tier 4
Nunney & Nunney Catch	Tier 4	97%				Tier 4
Oakhill	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Puriton	Tier 4	81%				Tier 4
Queen Camel	Tier 4	91%				Tier 4

Settlement	Settlement Role & Function Study Tier	% of area left after removing areas at highest climate risk	Action	Does application of climate factors leave the settlement surrounded by risk areas?	Additional action	Climate scenario settlement tier
Rode	Tier 4	93%				Tier 4
Ruishton (inc. Henlade)	Tier 4	77%	Drop by 1 tier			Countryside
Shepton Beauchamp	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Shipham	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Spaxton	Tier 4	96%				Tier 4
Stogumber	Tier 4	99%				Tier 4
Stogursey	Tier 4	93%				Tier 4
Stoke St Gregory (inc. Meare Green)	Tier 4	97%				Tier 4
Stoke St Michael	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Stoke sub Hamdon	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Tatworth (inc. South Chard & Chard Junction)	Tier 4	88%				Tier 4
Tintinhull	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Walton	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Washford	Tier 4	92%				Tier 4
Weare and Lower Weare	Tier 4	99%				Tier 4
Wedmore	Tier 4	96%				Tier 4
West Chinnock	Tier 4	93%				Tier 4
West Coker	Tier 4	96%				Tier 4
Westbury Sub Mendip	Tier 4	100%				Tier 4
Westonzoyland	Tier 4	43%	Drop by 2 tiers	Yes	Drop by 1 tier	Countryside
Winsham	Tier 4	97%				Tier 4
Wookey	Tier 4	96%				Tier 4
Woolavington	Tier 4	90%				Tier 4
Barrington	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Barton St David	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Barwick (inc. Stoford)	Countryside	85%				Countryside
Batcombe	Countryside	95%				Countryside
Bawdrip	Countryside	62%	Drop by 1 tier			Countryside
Bicknoller	Countryside	99%				Countryside

Settlement	Settlement Role & Function Study Tier	% of area left after removing areas at highest climate risk	Action	Does application of climate factors leave the settlement surrounded by risk areas?	Additional action	Climate scenario settlement tier
Binegar & Gurney Slade	Countryside	98%				Countryside
Blagdon Hill	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Blue Anchor	Countryside	52%	Drop by 1 tier			Countryside
Bradford-on-Tone	Countryside	80%				Countryside
Brushford	Countryside	84%				Countryside
Buckland Dinham	Countryside	96%				Countryside
Butleigh	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Carhampton	Countryside	94%				Countryside
Chedzoy	Countryside	66%	Drop by 1 tier			Countryside
Chilton Polden	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Churchinford	Countryside	*				Countryside
Compton Dundon and Dundon	Countryside	95%				Countryside
Cossington	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Cross	Countryside	75%	Drop by 1 tier			Countryside
Drayton	Countryside	96%				Countryside
East Chinnock	Countryside	85%				Countryside
East Huntspill	Countryside	0%	Drop by 2 tiers			Countryside
Easton	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Edithmead	Countryside	4%	Drop by 2 tiers			Countryside
Faulkland	Countryside	*				Countryside
Fitzhead	Countryside	*				Countryside

Settlement	Settlement Role & Function Study Tier	% of area left after removing areas at highest climate risk	Action	Does application of climate factors leave the settlement surrounded by risk areas?	Additional action	Climate scenario settlement tier
Fivehead	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Galhampton	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Halse	Countryside	89%				Countryside
Hardington Moor/Hardington Mandeville	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Holcombe	Countryside	98%				Countryside
Horsington	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Kilve	Countryside	94%				Countryside
Kingsbury Episcopi	Countryside	59%	Drop by 2 tiers			Countryside
Kingsdon	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Lydeard St Lawrence	Countryside	*				Countryside
Marston Magna	Countryside	76%	Drop by 1 tier			Countryside
Meare (inc. Oxenpill)	Countryside	75%	Drop by 1 tier	Yes	Drop by 1 tier	Countryside
Misterton	Countryside	100%				Countryside
North Perrott	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Odcombe	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Othey	Countryside	70%	Drop by 1 tier	Yes	Drop by 1 tier	Countryside
Pawlett	Countryside	70%	Drop by 1 tier	Yes	Drop by 1 tier	Countryside
Pilton	Countryside	98%				Countryside
Priddy	Countryside	*				Countryside
Rooks Bridge	Countryside	47%	Drop by 2 tiers			Countryside

Settlement	Settlement Role & Function Study Tier	% of area left after removing areas at highest climate risk	Action	Does application of climate factors leave the settlement surrounded by risk areas?	Additional action	Climate scenario settlement tier
Seavington St Michael	Countryside	96%				Countryside
Shapwick	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Sparkford	Countryside	94%				Countryside
Stoke St Mary	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Stratton-On-The-Fosse	Countryside	100%				Countryside
The Charltons - Charlton Adam & Charlton Mackrell	Countryside	100%				Countryside
The Lydfords	Countryside	*				Countryside
Theale	Countryside	87%				Countryside
Wanstrow	Countryside	*				Countryside
West Camel	Countryside	84%				Countryside
West Pennard	Countryside	100%				Countryside
West Quantoxhead	Countryside	100%				Countryside
Witham Friary	Countryside	*				Countryside
Wookey Hole	Countryside	97%				Countryside

* Settlement without an OS Built Up Area where a manual review was required.

There are some significant implications as a result of application of this methodology. Of key relevance are that the settlements of Bridgwater, Glastonbury, Highbridge & Burnham and Minehead & Alcombe, (all of which were either tier 1 or tier 2 settlements) would drop down at least one and in some cases two tiers. This results in Bridgwater, Glastonbury and Minehead & Alcombe being treated as tier 3 settlements, and Highbridge & Burnham being treated as a tier 4 settlement, with limited and minimal housing growth attributed in each case. This may well have significant social and economic implications for these communities, and would not make the most of infrastructure and job opportunities in particular in these locations.

However, there is a justification for considering this further given the vulnerability of these settlements to climate risks. If nothing else it highlights the difficulties that are likely to be encountered in finding sufficient suitable sites for housing development in and around these settlements, and points to the fact that the final preferred spatial strategy may need to account for this to some extent even if not as significantly as this.

The Climate Resilient spatial strategy option is summarised and presented in Figure 13, below:

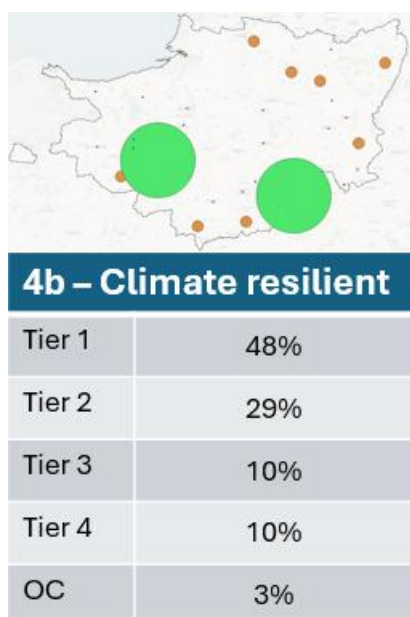


Figure 13 - Spatial strategy option derived from analysis of climate risks

Protected landscapes

NPPF policy S1 requires plans to meet the development needs of their area by providing for objectively assessed needs and any needs which cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless the presence of areas or assets of particular importance provide a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development, or the adverse impacts of doing so would substantially outweigh the benefits of doing so.⁵⁴ NPPF policy S2 further expects a plan’s spatial strategy to identify land which is protected or proposed to be enhanced and which places limits on acceptability of development proposals.⁵⁵ NPPF policy N1 expects plans to safeguard and enhance the natural environment and reflect wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services, steering development to utilise land of least environmental value including by limiting development within protected landscapes.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy S1

⁵⁵ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy S2

⁵⁶ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy N1

Somerset contains nationally important landscapes in the form of Exmoor National Park and five National Landscapes (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty):

- Quantock Hills National Landscape
- Blackdown Hills National Landscape
- Mendip Hills National Landscape
- Cranborne Chase National Landscape
- Dorset National Landscape (though in reality just a few fields of which lie within Somerset).

Exmoor National Park is its own Local Planning Authority and is as such outside of the Somerset Local Plan area. However, there is obviously an important relationship between development within Somerset LPA and the Park in terms of impacts upon its setting.

Together, the National Landscapes make up approximately 11.7% of the land within the Somerset LPA boundary. Again, there is obviously an important relationship between development outside of these National Landscapes and the Landscapes themselves in terms of impacts upon their settings.

The NPPF (2024) sets out that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks and National Landscapes, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.⁵⁷ The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited, and development within their settings should be sensitively located and designed so as to avoid or minimise adverse impacts within them. Planning permission for major development within the designated areas should be refused other than in exceptional circumstances where it is demonstrated that the development would be in the public interest. As such, there are significant constraints in relation to these protected landscapes and their settings, which the Somerset Local Plan will need to consider carefully in its distribution of development and site selection.

In addition to this, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 as amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023) places a duty on Somerset Council as a public body to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Parks and National Landscapes when exercising any function that may affect it.⁵⁸ This newly enhanced duty (previous to the LURA amendments, the duty was simply to “have regard to”), is a proactive requirement, meaning that the Council must actively consider how and whether decisions will further the purpose of conserving and enhancing these protected landscapes.

During early engagement work, it was clearly identified that these protected landscapes (and others) were particularly valued, and a strong steer was given to avoid the protected landscapes through the spatial strategy and site selection processes. Given the above national constraints and duties, the Plan will not be

⁵⁷ NPPF (2024), paragraph 189

⁵⁸ The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) as amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023) Chapter 37, S.85 (A1), available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37>.

looking to focus significant growth within the National Landscapes, and will need to actively consider how development outside of the National Landscapes would impact upon their setting and whether this would be conducive to furthering the purpose of conserving and enhancing their natural beauty.

Of the settlements within the proposed Somerset Local Plan settlement hierarchy, the eight listed in Table 18 are located at least partially within a National Landscape:

Table 18 - Settlements located at least partly within a National Landscape

Settlement	Relevant National Landscape	Settlement tier
Churchinford	Blackdown Hills	Open Countryside
Chewton Mendip	Mendip Hills	Tier 4
Kingston St Mary	Quantock Hills	Tier 4
Priddy	Mendip Hills	Open Countryside
Bicknoller	Quantock Hills	Open Countryside
Crowcombe	Quantock Hills	Tier 4
Kilve	Quantock Hills	Open Countryside
West Quantoxhead	Quantock Hills	Open Countryside

In each case, these settlements are considered by the hierarchy to be part of the open countryside or a Tier 4 settlement, and as such would likely have minimal or limited growth directed to them anyway.

Some settlements lie immediately adjacent to either the National Park (e.g. Minehead & Alcombe) or a National Landscape (e.g. Wells), and clearly these settlements will likely have greater sensitivity in this regard. Beyond the National Landscapes and National Park themselves, their settings are less easily defined as a location's sensitivity will depend significantly upon the topography, intervening vegetation, existing built context and other factors. The impact of a development within a given location is further dependent upon its layout, design, orientation, scale, massing and material selection amongst other things. As such, it is difficult to determine a specific and definitive extent beyond the boundaries of the National Park and National Landscapes within which development would not be appropriate. However, as a proxy, it can be recognised that the 34 settlements listed in Table 19 are located at least partially within 2km of the National Park or one or more National Landscape. This highlights that development around these settlements may potentially have greater sensitivity than development outside of these areas.

Table 19 - Settlements located at least partially within 2km of Exmoor National Park or National Landscapes

Settlement	Within 2km of
Axbridge	Mendip Hills
Bishops Lydeard	Quantock Hills
Blagdon Hill	Blackdown Hills
Blue Anchor	Exmoor National Park
Brushford	Exmoor National Park
Carhampton	Exmoor National Park
Chard	Blackdown Hills

Cheddar	Mendip Hills
Combe St Nicholas	Blackdown Hills
Crewkerne	Dorset
Cross	Mendip Hills
Draycott	Mendip Hills
Easton	Mendip Hills
Minehead & Alcombe	Exmoor National Park
Misterton	Dorset
Nether Stowey	Quantock Hills
North Perrott	Dorset
North Petherton*	Quantock Hills
Norton St Philip	Cotswolds
Shipham	Mendip Hills
Spaxton	Quantock Hills
Stogumber	Exmoor National Park and Quantock Hills
Stoke St Mary	Blackdown Hills
Tatworth	Blackdown Hills and Dorset
Taunton*	Blackdown Hills and Quantock Hills
Weare and Lower Weare	Mendip Hills
Wells	Mendip Hills
Wellington	Blackdown Hills
Westbury Sub Mendip	Mendip Hills
Williton	Quantock Hills
Winsham	Dorset
Witham Friary	Cranborne Chase
Wookey	Mendip Hills
Wookey Hole	Mendip Hills

*North Petherton and Taunton existing settlement limits extend only very slightly into the 2km buffer zones of these National Landscapes.

However, the extent of the area forming the setting of each protected landscape is not definitive, and would be insufficient to base a spatial strategy option around. Instead, these constraints are better understood via site assessment and selection processes.

Transport and connectivity

NPPF policy TR1 expects plans to take a vision-led approach to planning for transport, with sustainable transport being considered from the earliest stages of plan-making, being reflected in the plan vision and proposals and forming an integral part of the plan's strategy. It expects plans to take account of opportunities for prioritising and maximising sustainable movement across the area, and to locate development where it can support sustainable patterns of movement and make

effective use of existing or proposed transport infrastructure. The DfT Connectivity Tool is referenced as being available to inform the assessment and selection of sites alongside other relevant evidence.⁵⁹ NPPF policy HO4 makes clear reference across to TR1 and taking advantage of opportunities presented by existing or planned infrastructure investment.⁶⁰ NPPF policy CC1 requires plans to take a proactive approach to mitigating climate change in line with the objectives and provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008. It explicitly states that spatial strategies should contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions (potentially informed by assessment of baseline carbon emissions and potential effect of development options on future emissions and their mitigation).⁶¹ NPPF policy HC1 expects plans to promote the creation of healthy and inclusive places by promoting good health, preventing ill-health and supporting social interaction through spatial strategy and allocations, locating development where it will support walking and cycling.⁶²

Early engagement highlighted a keenness for spatial distribution of growth to be infrastructure-led, with a particular focus on the opportunities provided by the rail network and strategic road network identified as central to this. Access to services and facilities, and providing opportunities and genuine choice for people to travel by sustainable modes were also highlighted as important priorities.

The NPPF (2024) states that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, using a vision-led approach to identify transport solutions that deliver well-designed, sustainable and popular places. The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives, with significant development focused in locations that are or can be made sustainable through reducing the need to travel and offering genuine choice of transport modes.⁶³ Whilst some of these elements are picked up by the decision-making policies in the new consultation draft NPPF, they still provide an important context.

Reference within the NPPF to a vision-led approach is a direct response to historical approaches to transport planning which have taken a ‘predict and provide’ approach which casts forward historic trends and which has led to car-centric development and mitigations focused around road capacity improvements. Vision-led transport planning focuses on a ‘decide and provide’ or ‘vision and validate’ approach, whereby the vision for place, transport and connectivity is clearly articulated up front, and decisions are made in line with this, with the measures required to validate this vision then being identified and provided.

Taking account of the above, it was considered that a spatial strategy option focused around transport and connectivity would be particularly relevant. This, alongside the focus on placemaking, connectivity, climate resilience, opportunity and economic vitality within the plan vision, numerous references across to transport focused

⁵⁹ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy TR1

⁶⁰ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy HO4

⁶¹ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy CC1

⁶² Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy HC1

⁶³ NPPF (2024) Paragraphs 109 and 110.

considerations underpinning the plan objectives/outcomes, and embedded cross-cutting themes of sustainability and health and wellbeing, could embed a vision-led approach to the Local Plan from the outset.

The starting point for this option was to identify the settlements with existing rail stations and higher frequency bus connectivity. Only commercial rail stations were chosen (i.e. those serving heritage rail or minerals haulage only were discounted). Manual searching of bus timetables was used to help identify some of the higher frequency bus routes (21/21A between Taunton-Bridgwater-Burnham, 22 between Wellington-Taunton, 28 between Minehead-Taunton, and combination of 374/375/376 between Street-Glastonbury-Wells). Whilst these were identified as being higher frequency than the majority of routes in the context of Somerset provision, they would generally not be considered as genuinely high frequency in the national context. As an example, the consultation draft NPPF (2025) suggests that in relation to rail, high connectivity would equate to some four trains per hour. These bus routes all have services running at sub-hourly intervals, but this is currently higher frequency in Somerset. To make the most of a strategy focused around high frequency public transport corridors, frequencies will need to increase significantly.

After identifying the existing situation, an allowance was made for potential future rail connectivity. This placed greatest weight on the potential Wellington station, where funding has been confirmed and the project has good backing from Network Rail and DfT. Below this, potential future stations as identified in the emerging Local Transport Plan (Bishop's Lydeard, Langport and Somerton), at the Gravity site (Puriton), and other local aspiration at Chard Junction (Tatworth) were accounted for with less weight due to being at much earlier stages of possibility. Settlements with an existing rail station and higher frequency bus connectivity were given the highest score, with Wellington station also being counted similarly given its advanced project status. Locations with either a rail station *or* higher frequency bus connectivity were ranked next, before locations with *potential* rail connectivity only. Smaller villages with higher frequency bus connectivity only were given higher priority than other villages of the same tier, but lower priority than higher tier settlements despite their wider connectivity.

The initial outputs of this method were reviewed. Whilst it appeared to anecdotally reflect some level of existing and potential connectivity differentials across Somerset, it felt like some of the assumptions involved around bus connectivity in particular was insufficiently robust. The manual bus timetable searches had proven extremely time consuming, meaning that it had been necessary to make assumptions about which routes and settlements were likely to be higher frequency. As such, it wasn't a complete review, and there was a margin for human error. Furthermore, it didn't feel like the approach provided sufficient justifiable differential between settlements outside of the top two or three tiers of the hierarchy. Therefore, it was considered necessary to reconsider the methodology.

The relative accessibility/connectivity of every settlement had been identified already as part of the Settlement Role and Function Study. This work utilised an Accessibility Tool developed for the Council by transport consultants WSP. The Tool focused

around assessing how many different types of destination can be reached within 20 minutes' travel time on foot, by bike, by public transport and by car, summing and weighting these to calculate an overall score for each settlement. Further information on the Tool and methodology it uses can be found within the Settlement Role and Function Study report. As explained within the Settlement Role and Function Study, this accessibility scoring has contributed towards the overall settlement score, and the resulting settlement hierarchy. However, accessibility was just a contributing factor, alongside other considerations. It was felt relevant to explore here how each settlement would rank based upon the Accessibility Tool outputs alone, and in particular the elements comprised by public transport.

The Accessibility Tool considers how many different types of destination can be reached within 20 minutes' travel time on foot, by bike, by public transport and by car.⁶⁴ However, it was quickly identified that in the interests of identifying settlements where there is genuine choice of transport mode, then access to public transport would be the key differentiator. Furthermore, public transport (principally buses and trains) obviously run along routes which effectively establish corridors within which there is or could be access to these modes. As such it was considered appropriate to frame the spatial strategy option around public transport corridors in particular.

As explained within the Settlement Role and Function Study report and the accompanying WSP Technical Note, the Public Transport access score for a settlement within the Tool was calculated based upon a count of unique bus and train trips through the centre of each settlement, totalled across a typical weekday. This gave a relative score for each settlement in Somerset, with those settlements where buses and trains stop more often scoring better than those where they stop less frequently or not at all.

However, this didn't feel like it sufficiently acknowledged the differential between bus and rail, with Rail Access having the potential to offer access to a much wider area and number of employment and other opportunities. As such, the Tool also calculates a separate rail access score based on a count of the number of large settlements which are accessible within 60 minutes by train from each of the settlements, allowing for an access distance of up to 5km to the station. This scored settlements with a rail station and faster and more frequent trains to major settlements more favourably than those with slower and/or less frequent trains, or not at all. By summing both the general Public Transport score and the Rail Access score, it was possible to arrive at a combined total score which was much more reflective of the baseline public transport connectivity for each settlement with sufficient differential.

The output scores were analysed and then the settlements were prioritised into five bands based on this score, with the threshold between each band falling where there

⁶⁴ Note, whilst the Accessibility Tool identified access to destinations by car, this was not used in the scoring for the Settlement Role and Function Study. For more on this please see the separate Settlement Role and Function report.

appeared to be a reasonable differential between groups of settlements. Table 20, below, shows this banding.

Table 20 - Table identifying existing public transport access scoring, and resulting Public Transport Connectivity Priority bands

Settlement	Settlement Hierarchy Tier	PT Access	Rail access	Total	PT Connectivity Priority banding
Taunton	Tier 1	300	100	400	1
Bridgwater	Tier 1	88	86	174	1
Yeovil	Tier 1	99	71	170	1
Frome	Tier 2	95	43	138	1
Highbridge & Burnham (inc. Burnham Marine)	Tier 2	25	86	111	2
Abbas & Templecombe	Tier 3b	28	71	99	2
North Petherton	Tier 3a	85	0	85	2
Misterton	Countryside	3	86	89	*3
Horsington	Countryside	5	71	76	3
Crewkerne	Tier 2	5	57	62	3
Barwick (inc. Stoford)	Countryside	0	57	57	3
Ansford & Castle Cary	Tier 3a	13	43	56	3
Wellington	Tier 2	56	0	56	3
Wells	Tier 2	55	0	55	3
Street	Tier 2	51	0	51	3
Bruton & Pitcombe	Tier 3a	7	43	50	3
Glastonbury	Tier 2	49	0	49	3
Beckington	Tier 4	36	0	36	3
Henstridge	Tier 4	7	29	36	3
Ditcheat	Tier 4	6	29	35	3
Shepton Mallet	Tier 2	35	0	35	3
Minehead & Alcombe	Tier 2	34	0	34	3
Chedzoy	Countryside	4	29	33	3
Haselbury Plucknett	Tier 4	1	29	30	3
North Perrott	Countryside	1	29	30	3
East Huntspill	Countryside	0	29	29	3
Edithmead	Countryside	0	29	29	3
Huntspill (inc. West Huntspill)	Tier 4	0	29	29	3
Bishop's Lydeard	Tier 3b	28	0	28	3
Coxley & Upper Coxley & Coxley Wick	Tier 4	25	0	25	3
Watchet	Tier 3b	24	0	24	3
Williton	Tier 3b	24	0	24	3
Stratton-On-The-Fosse	Countryside	22	0	22	4
Galhampton	Countryside	7	14	21	4
Buckland Dinham	Countryside	20	0	20	4
Chewton Mendip	Tier 4	20	0	20	4

Settlement	Settlement Hierarchy Tier	PT Access	Rail access	Total	PT Connectivity Priority banding
Norton St Philip	Tier 4	5	14	19	4
Langport & Huish Episcopi	Tier 3a	17	0	17	4
Walton	Tier 4	17	0	17	4
Ilchester	Tier 3b	16	0	16	4
Iminster	Tier 3a	15	0	15	4
Othery	Countryside	15	0	15	4
Brent Knoll	Tier 4	0	14	14	4
North & East Coker	Tier 4	0	14	14	4
Rooks Bridge	Countryside	14	0	14	4
Cheddar	Tier 2	13	0	13	4
Chilcompton	Tier 3b	13	0	13	4
Cotford St Luke	Tier 3b	13	0	13	4
Ashcott	Tier 4	12	0	12	4
Wincanton (inc. Bayford)	Tier 2	12	0	12	4
Somerton	Tier 3a	11	0	11	4
South Petherton	Tier 3b	10	0	10	4
Martock & Bower Hinton	Tier 3b	9	0	9	5
Stoke sub Hamdon	Tier 4	9	0	9	5
Bicknoller	Countryside	8	0	8	5
Kilmersdon	Tier 4	8	0	8	5
Pilton	Countryside	8	0	8	5
Sparkford	Countryside	8	0	8	5
West Pennard	Countryside	8	0	8	5
Westonzoyland	Tier 4	8	0	8	5
Ash	Tier 4	7	0	7	5
Brushford	Countryside	7	0	7	5
Chilthorne Domer	Tier 4	7	0	7	5
Coleford	Tier 4	7	0	7	5
Evercreech	Tier 3b	7	0	7	5
Faulkland	Countryside	7	0	7	5
Holcombe	Countryside	7	0	7	5
Kingsdon	Countryside	7	0	7	5
Middlezoy	Tier 4	7	0	7	5
Milborne Port	Tier 3b	7	0	7	5
Shapwick	Countryside	7	0	7	5
Tintinhull	Tier 4	7	0	7	5
Axbridge	Tier 3b	6	0	6	5
Compton Dundon and Dundon	Countryside	6	0	6	5
Kingston St Mary	Tier 4	6	0	6	5
Marston Magna	Countryside	6	0	6	5
North Cadbury	Tier 4	6	0	6	5
Nunney & Nunney Catch	Tier 4	6	0	6	5
Queen Camel	Tier 4	6	0	6	5

Settlement	Settlement Hierarchy Tier	PT Access	Rail access	Total	PT Connectivity Priority banding
Croscombe	Tier 4	5	0	5	5
Oakhill	Tier 4	5	0	5	5
Barrington	Countryside	4	0	4	5
Berrow & Brean	Tier 3b	4	0	4	5
Binegar & Gurney Slade	Countryside	4	0	4	5
Chard	Tier 2	4	0	4	5
Cossington	Countryside	4	0	4	5
Ilton	Tier 4	4	0	4	5
Leigh-On-Mendip	Tier 4	4	0	4	5
Lympsham	Tier 4	4	0	4	5
Mells	Tier 4	4	0	4	5
North Curry	Tier 4	4	0	4	5
Shepton Beauchamp	Tier 4	4	0	4	5
Stoke St Gregory (inc. Meare Green)	Tier 4	4	0	4	5
Stoke St Michael	Tier 4	4	0	4	5
Tatworth (inc. South Chard & Chard Junction)	Tier 4	4	0	4	5
The Lydfords	Countryside	4	0	4	5
Wedmore	Tier 4	4	0	4	5
Wiveliscombe	Tier 3b	4	0	4	5
Cannington	Tier 3b	3	0	3	5
Creech St Michael	Tier 3b	3	0	3	5
Kilve	Countryside	3	0	3	5
Nether Stowey	Tier 3b	3	0	3	5
West Quantoxhead	Countryside	3	0	3	5
Blagdon Hill	Countryside	2	0	2	5
Catcott & Edington	Tier 4	2	0	2	5
Chilton Polden	Countryside	2	0	2	5
Combe St Nicholas (inc. Wadeford)	Tier 4	2	0	2	5
Draycott	Tier 4	2	0	2	5
East Brent	Tier 4	2	0	2	5
Easton	Countryside	2	0	2	5
Hatch Beauchamp	Tier 4	2	0	2	5
Hillcommon (inc. Oake)	Tier 4	2	0	2	5
Horton (and Broadway)	Tier 4	2	0	2	5
Kingsbury Episcopi	Countryside	2	0	2	5
Milverton	Tier 4	2	0	2	5
Odcombe	Countryside	2	0	2	5
Ruishton (inc. Henlade)	Tier 4	2	0	2	5
Stogursey	Tier 4	2	0	2	5
Theale	Countryside	2	0	2	5

Settlement	Settlement Hierarchy Tier	PT Access	Rail access	Total	PT Connectivity Priority banding
West Coker	Tier 4	2	0	2	5
Westbury Sub Mendip	Tier 4	2	0	2	5
Wookey	Tier 4	2	0	2	5
Wookey Hole	Countryside	2	0	2	5
Charlton Horethorne	Tier 4	1	0	1	5
Churchinford	Countryside	1	0	1	5
Hardington Moor/Hardington Mandeville	Countryside	1	0	1	5
High Ham	Tier 4	1	0	1	5
Keinton Mandeville	Tier 4	1	0	1	5
Spaxton	Tier 4	1	0	1	5
The Charltons - Charlton Adam & Charlton Mackrell	Countryside	1	0	1	5
Wanstrow	Countryside	1	0	1	5
West Camel	Countryside	1	0	1	5
West Chinnock	Tier 4	1	0	1	5
Baltonsborough	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Barton St David	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Batcombe	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Bawdrip	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Blackford	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Blue Anchor	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Bradford-on-Tone	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Butleigh	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Carhampton	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Combwich	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Cross	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Crowcombe	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Curry Mallet	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Curry Rivel	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Drayton	Countryside	0	0	0	5
East Chinnock	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Fitzhead	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Fivehead	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Halse	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Hambridge	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Hinton St George	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Langford Budville	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Long Sutton	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Lydeard St Lawrence	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Mark (and Mark Causeway)	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Meare (inc. Oxenpill)	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Merriot	Tier 4	0	0	0	5

Settlement	Settlement Hierarchy Tier	PT Access	Rail access	Total	PT Connectivity Priority banding
Montacute (inc. East Stoke)	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
North Newton	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Norton Sub Hamdon	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Pawlett	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Priddy	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Puriton	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Rode	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Seavington St Michael	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Shipham	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Stogumber	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Stoke St Mary	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Washford	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Weare and Lower Weare	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Winsham	Tier 4	0	0	0	5
Witham Friary	Countryside	0	0	0	5
Woolavington	Tier 4	0	0	0	5

* Note, Misterton scored sufficiently to be potentially part of band 2 because of its location close to Crewkerne station and bus services through the village. However, there is little else in the way of services or facilities currently within Misterton (hence its identification a part of the Countryside within the Role and Function Study). As such, it was considered reasonable to cap open countryside settlements (including Misterton) at a maximum band 3 level.

This approach highlights some interesting things in relation to the baseline public transport accessibility of various settlements in Somerset. In particular the Tier 2 settlements of Chard, Cheddar and Wincanton score particularly badly on existing public transport accessibility, with Chard coming out in band 5 as one of the lowest scoring settlements for public transport access, and Cheddar and Wincanton not much better in band 4. Larger Tier 3 settlements like Somerton, Langport and Ilminster (band 4) also fare poorly in reflection of the limited existing access. Conversely, some very small settlements like Misterton, Horsington and Barwick (inc. Stoford) in particular score very well due to their proximity to rail stations (Crewkerne, Yeovil Junction and Templecombe respectively). Misterton even scores slightly better than Crewkerne overall because of Crewkerne station's location meaning that this inhibits the number of larger settlements that can be reached within one hour by rail from residents of Crewkerne, compared to those of Misterton. It also highlights quite how much more connected Taunton is over other settlements, with the total score for Taunton (400) being not much more than the totals of Bridgwater, Yeovil and Frome combined (482). In one sense, this scenario could see Taunton identified as a separate band above the others identified in Priority band 1. However, considering it alongside the other three settlements aligns well with the emerging Local Transport Plan 'place types' (see more on this below).

The Centre for Sustainable Energy and the University of Exeter’s Centre for Energy and the Environment together produced a Carbon Impact Tool in 2024.⁶⁵ This tool analyses the consumption and territorial emissions of communities across a range of factors. The data is available at parish level (although there are some gaps owing to former unparished areas) and in both total and per household formats. The data on travel consumption emissions per household was considered potentially useful to identify areas of Somerset with higher emissions associated with travel. The consumption data splits travel into three categories – flights, private transport and public transport. The private transport category was considered appropriate to give an indication on the level of reliance upon personal vehicular travel (over public), and areas where locating new development may result in higher carbon emissions unless accompanied by significant investment in sustainable transport, services and facilities. Figure 14, below, identifies the per household consumption emissions associated with private transport in each parish across Somerset, with the settlements identified in accordance with the above priority bandings. It shows that the majority of band 1, 2, and 3 settlements according to this methodology are in areas with comparatively lower private transport consumption emissions (though there are some exceptions). Band 4 and 5 settlements tend to be located in areas with comparatively higher private transport consumption emissions, but there are notable exceptions to these including Chard. The lower emission parishes appear to be relatively well related to the larger settlements and areas with greater self-containment (including the West Somerset coastal strip). Overall, this data can be seen to reasonably back up the initial approach to banding settlements according to public transport connectivity.

Per Household Private Transport Consumption Emissions by Parish

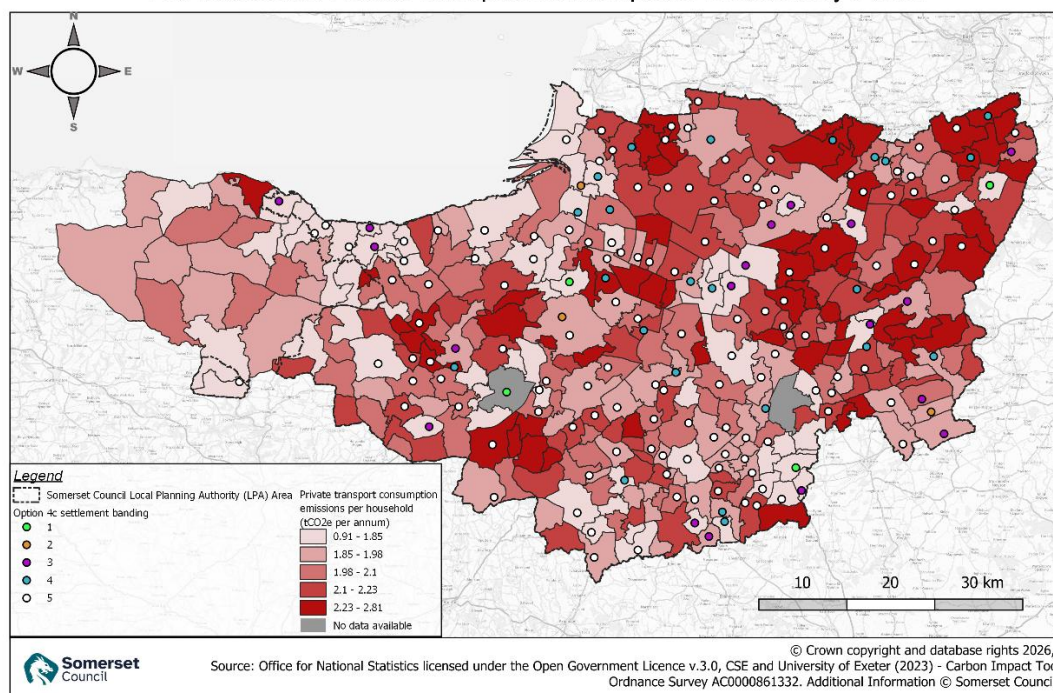


Figure 14 - Per Household Private Transport Consumption Emissions by Parish (Carbon Impact Tool)

⁶⁵ CSE and UoE CEE (2024) Carbon Impact Tool, available at <https://impact-tool.org.uk/>

The above results were used to establish an initial Public Transport Corridors spatial strategy option. Each priority band was assigned a % of the overall housing growth, with that figure then distributed equally amongst the settlements in that band. Table 21, below, sets out how this was distributed. The percentages applied to each banding were designed to clearly reflect a strong focus on the settlements with the greatest public transport accessibility. As such bands 1 and 2 received heavy weightings, but not completely out of kilter with the top two tiers in existing spatial strategies (although to different settlements). Conversely, the lowest priority banding deliberately was chosen to receive no growth, and band 4 just 1%, reflecting their poor public transport connectivity.

Table 21 - Distribution of growth by Public Transport Connectivity priority banding

Priority banding	% of overall growth	Settlements split across
1	60%	4
2	25%	3
3	14%	25
4	1%	20
5	0%	124

The initial Public Transport Corridors spatial strategy option is summarised and presented in Figure 15, below (note that this translates across to the settlement hierarchy tiers):

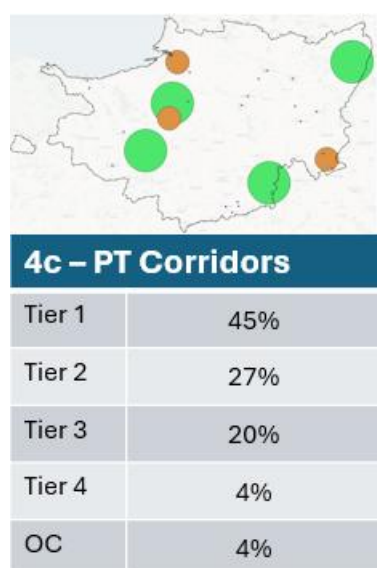


Figure 15 - Spatial strategy option derived from public transport connectivity

After the initial Public Transport Corridors option was developed, the DfT Connectivity Tool became publicly available. As such, it was felt appropriate to review the outputs from the WSP Accessibility Tool with the ‘public transport’ mode outputs from the DfT Connectivity Tool. Figure 16, below, provides a screenshot of the Connectivity Tool output. This generally supported the most accessible settlements identified by the Accessibility Tool. However, it does not appear to give

as high a weighting to rail, as locations with good rail connectivity but little or no bus access (e.g. Misterton, Stoford, Templecombe, Horsington, and to a lesser extent Castle Cary and Bruton) don't score that well overall. Conversely, settlements with fairly poor overall bus service and no rail access including Chard, Cheddar and Wincanton score better than you might expect.

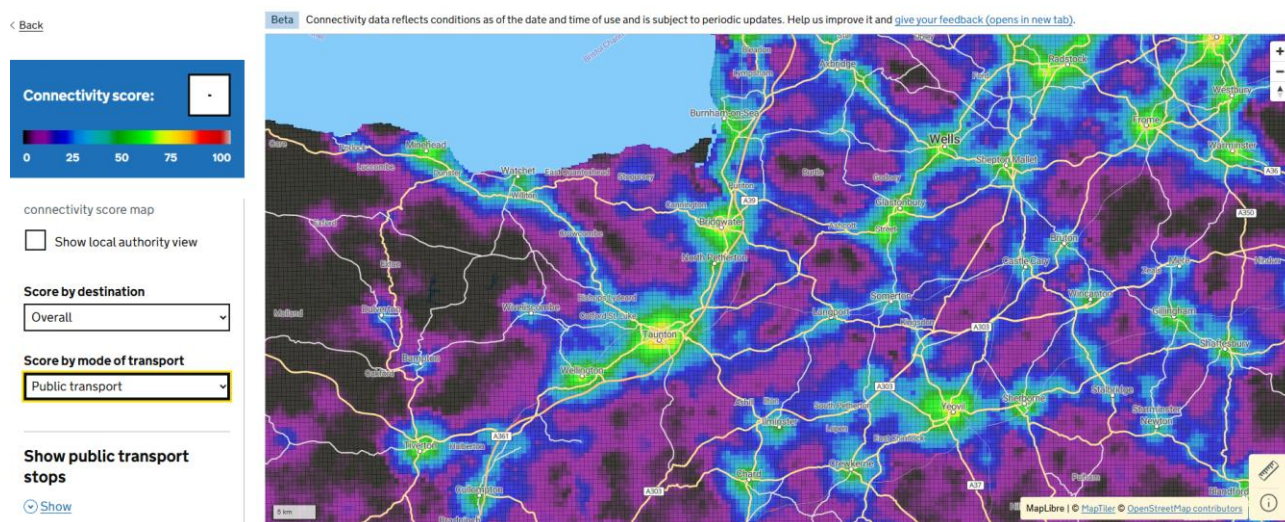


Figure 16 - Screenshot of the DfT Connectivity Tool output for Somerset scored by public transport⁶⁶

However, the Connectivity Tool maps do present the baseline public transport connectivity in a more helpful way for identifying corridors. The initial spatial strategy option approach feels very static and centralised in approach, whereas the reality of public transport is far more linear in nature hence the idea of a corridor approach. The Connectivity Tool mapping corroborates earlier research that the key bus corridors appear to be between Wellington-Taunton-Bridgwater-Burnham, Minehead-Taunton, Street-Glastonbury-Wells. This could potentially provide a justifiable basis for initial corridor identification alongside the rail lines.

When considering potential corridors, it will also be important to consider the current and potential future viability of existing bus services. As reported in the SA Scoping Report,⁶⁷ in Somerset there is one major operator which provides the majority of the commercial bus network and then a number of SMEs making up the rest of the network providing a small proportion of commercial services but predominantly tendered services under contract to the Local Transport Authority. Local bus networks are focussed on Taunton, Wellington, Bridgwater, Yeovil and Wells, plus secondary towns such as Glastonbury and Minehead. The current network is illustrated in Figure 17, below, with commercial bus services (showing in red), daytime commercial services with additional funding to support evenings and weekends (yellow), fully subsidised services (light blue) and college day only

⁶⁶ DfT (2025) Connectivity Tool Lite, available at <https://connectivity-tool-lite.dft.gov.uk/>

⁶⁷ Somerset Council (2026) SA Scoping Report, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/evidence-base/>

subsidised services (blue dashes). This really demonstrates the level of support that goes into the bus network at present.

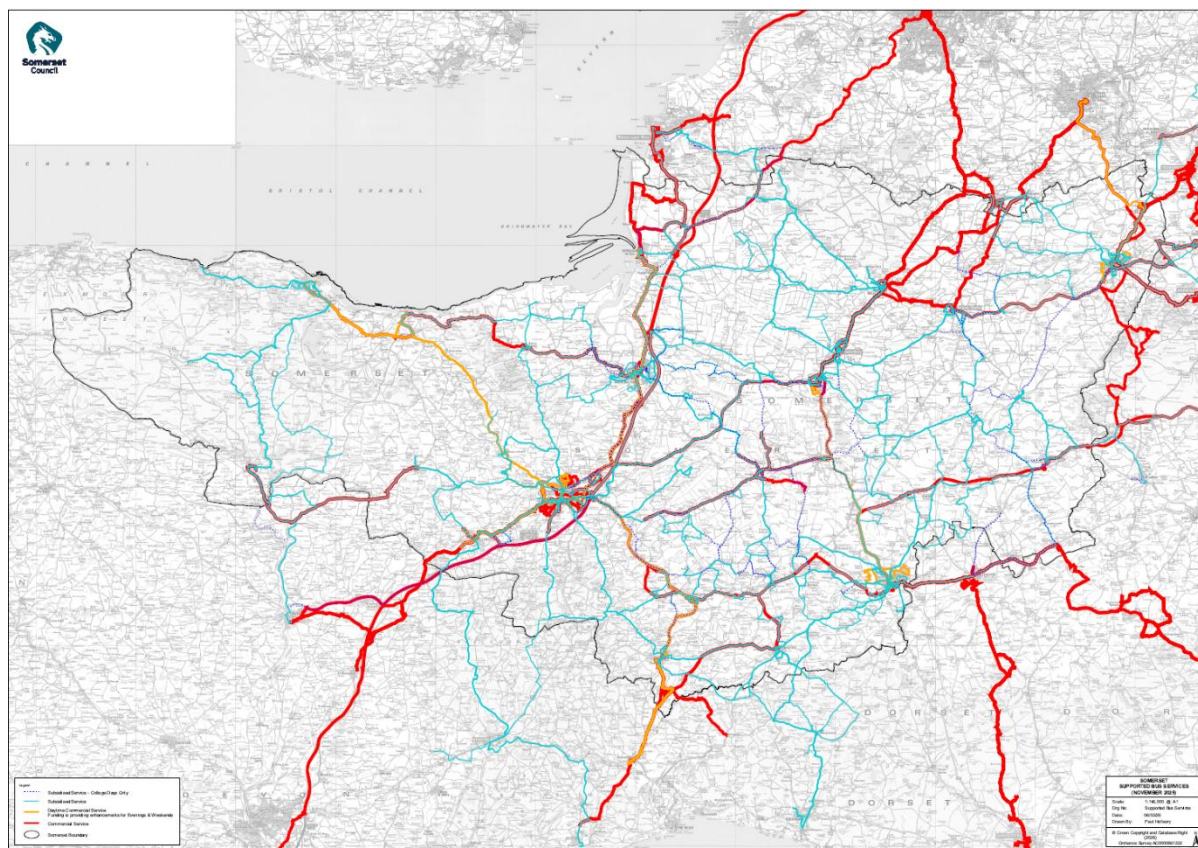


Figure 17 - A map showing commercial bus services (red), daytime commercial services with additional funding to support evenings and weekends (yellow), fully subsidised services (light blue) and college day only subsidised services (blue dashes) for bus routes in Somerset

Commercial operation of services is extremely challenging and following the pandemic there has been a reduction in the commercial network and a subsequent increase in supported services. The Bus Service Improvement Plan sets out how Somerset Council will work together with local bus service operators and other key stakeholders to deliver radically improved bus services and growth in bus use as part of a wider integrated sustainable transport network.⁶⁸

The initial spatial strategy option also fails to recognise future *potential* public transport connectivity opportunities. Location of development along public transport corridors potentially has the opportunity to help improve commercial viability of routes and drive investment in new/improved services. This could be in the form of enhanced frequency, extended operating hours, new bus stops, bus priority measures, access to stop/station improvements, or even in the case of rail, new stations.

It was considered whether it might be possible to account for potential future rail connectivity in a way consistent with other rail access scores within the WSP Accessibility Tool. However, to do so would require understanding (or at least

⁶⁸ Somerset Council (2024) Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) 2024 - <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/the-national-bus-strategy-bus-back-better/>

justifiable estimates) of the number and frequency of trains to major settlements that might be reachable from a potential station, and this would require assumption to be made about how such stations would fit within existing timetabling and services. As such, it was felt that insufficient information existed to score settlements with potential stations in this way.

With regard to buses, it was considered that an important starting point would be understanding the commerciality of existing services. Across Somerset, the vast majority of routes are either funded or supported by Somerset Council, neighbouring authorities or town councils, with funding from the Bus Service Improvement Plan playing a key role with some routes and extending operating hours of some commercial services. Commercial routes were seen as the safest routes to rely upon for the future, whilst subsidised routes understandably have less certainty in the current funding situation. Despite this, all routes including commercial ones could benefit from housing growth along them, which might provide increased patronage and improve commerciality.

Viable bus services rely on finding the sweet spot between routing, frequency, vehicle size and pricing. For instance, improving frequency of a service from every 20 minutes to every 15 minutes may require the addition of an extra vehicle to the fleet, with associated capital and revenue costs. The respective increase in patronage may not always be sufficient to match this. Equally, the diversion of a bus route into a site may pick up new patronage, but this might impact service frequency, which could in turn reduce attractiveness of the route to others. Working out the impacts and benefits of meeting potential opportunities is therefore complex.

However, the Local Plan early engagement, and consultation on the Local Transport Plan (LTP) have provided useful information on the places people want to go, and the 'missing' or 'insufficient' public transport routes/connections which they would like provided/improved.

Missing or insufficient public transport connections identified through the Local Plan early engagement are identified in Figure 18, below, and include:

Bus

- Minehead – Bridgwater (currently just one bus a day to get kids to and from Bridgwater College)
- Wellington – Taunton (improved frequency)
- Surrounding villages (e.g. Cotford St Luke, Curry Rivel) – Taunton (improved frequency)
- Ilminster – Yeovil (direct service needed)
- Chard and Ilminster – Crewkerne (improved frequency)
- Ilchester – Yeovil (improved frequency)
- Martock – Somerton and Ilchester (direct services needed)
- Milborne Port – Sherborne (improved frequency)
- Glastonbury – Wells (improved frequency)
- Glastonbury – Shepton Mallett – Frome (direct services needed and improved frequency)

- Glastonbury – Castle Cary (direct services needed)
- Wells – Castle Cary (direct services needed and improved frequency)
- Shepton Mallett – Castle Cary (improved frequency)
- Castle Cary – Frome (direct service needed)
- Midsomer Norton – Norton St Philip – Trowbridge (direct service needed)
- East Brent – Weston Super Mare (direct service needed)

Rail

- Wellington Station (new station)
- Minehead – Watchet – Williton – Bishops Lydeard – Taunton (revive commercial services on West Somerset Railway)
- Creech St Michael (new/reinstated halt)
- Langport / Somerton (new station)
- Bridgwater – Somerton (new line and new station on the Levels)
- Sparkford (new station)
- Glastonbury and Shepton Mallett – Evercreech – Bruton – Wincanton – Templecombe (reinstatement of Somerset and Dorset Railway)
- Shepton Mallett – Frome (reconnection with minerals rail and new station at Witham Friary)
- Frome (improved frequency)

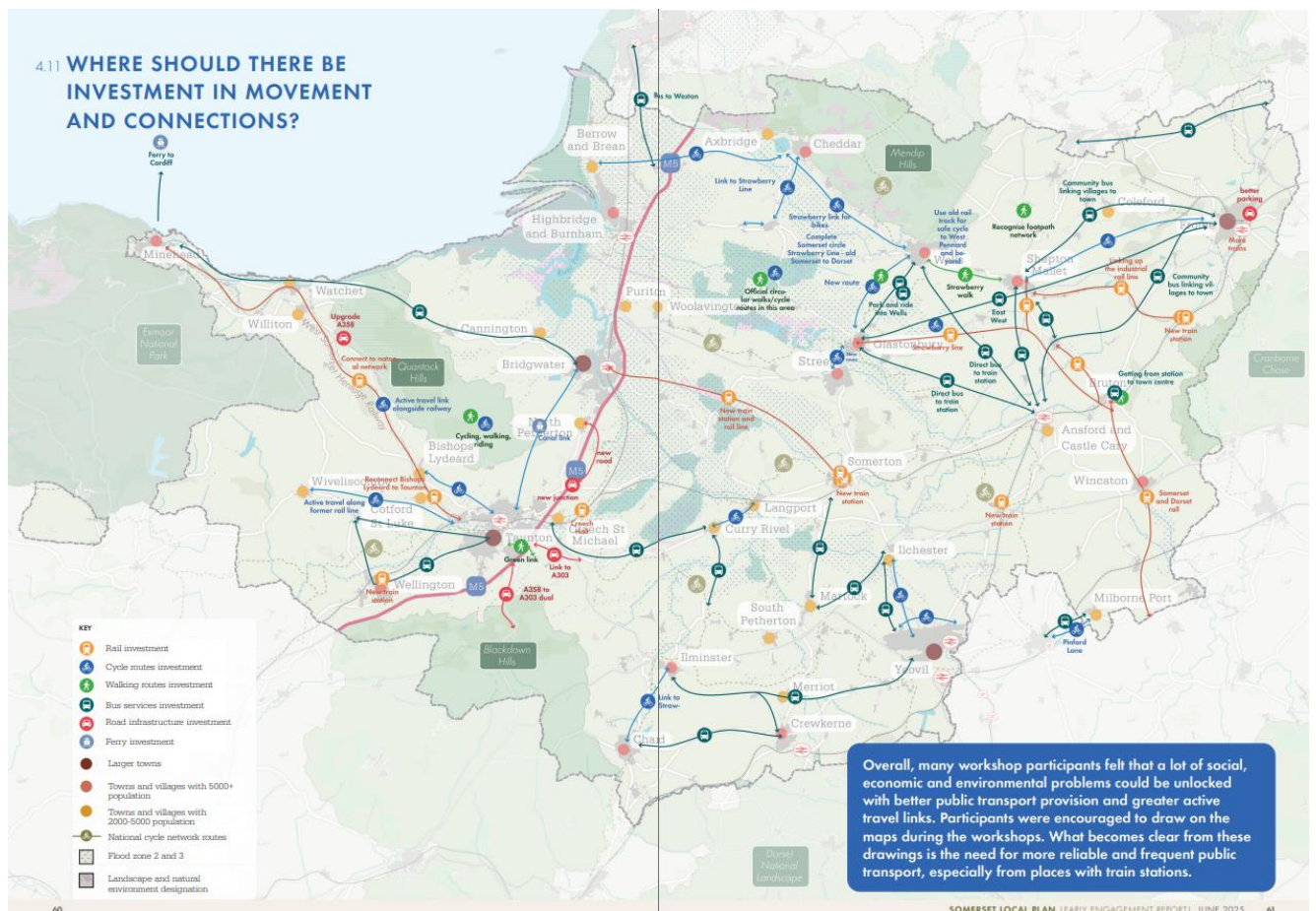


Figure 18 - Missing or insufficient public transport connections identified through Local Plan Early Engagement activities (taken from the Early Engagement Report)

Whilst not all community ‘asks’ are necessarily deliverable exactly as proposed, improved public transport connectivity between these places can be seen as an aspiration of existing communities. New development in the right location can potentially assist in realising these desires for improved connections.

The consultation draft LTP⁶⁹ includes a number of high level actions relating to improving public transport including those set out in Table 22, below:

Table 22 - High level actions about improving public transport from the Consultation Draft Local Transport Plan

Place	Theme / Objective	Measure
Our Network	Sustainable First Choice	New and/or enhanced bus services to serve new development across the county
Our Network	Reliable and Resilient Network	Work with partners to secure enhancements to second strategic route railway into Somerset
Larger Urban Areas	Sustainable First Choice	Taunton Bus Station Mobility Hub
Larger Urban Areas	Sustainable First Choice	Explore the opportunity for a Yeovil Bus Station Mobility Hub
Larger Urban Areas	Sustainable First Choice	Develop proposals with partners for hourly rail services between Frome – Bath and Yeovil – Taunton
Larger Urban Areas	Reduce Environmental Impacts	Roll out of cleaner and zero emission buses
Larger Urban Areas	Reliable and Resilient Network	Taunton Northern Corridor Bus Priority Improvements
Larger Urban Areas	Reliable and Resilient Network	Taunton Eastern Corridor Bus Priority Improvements
Larger Urban Areas	Reliable and Resilient Network	Taunton Western Corridor Bus Priority Improvements
Larger Urban Areas	Reliable and Resilient Network	Enhance bus corridor between Monkton Heathfield and the town centre (Taunton)
Linked Settlements	Sustainable First Choice	Deliver mobility hub at Commercial Road, Shepton Mallett
Linked Settlements	Sustainable First Choice	Improved bus stop facilities and vehicles along A39 corridor
Linked Settlements	Sustainable First Choice	Additional evening services to serve Glastonbury Community Hospital
Coastal Towns	Sustainable First Choice	Improve bus services between Burnham-Highbridge and Bridgwater

⁶⁹ Somerset Council (2025) Local Transport Plan 4: Draft for Consultation, available at <https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/active-travel/copy-of-local-transport-plan-2025/>

Coastal Towns	Sustainable First Choice	Provision of step-free access at Highbridge and Burnham station
Coastal Towns	Sustainable First Choice	Secure cycle parking at bus stops on A39 Minehead – Taunton route
Chard, Crewkerne and Wellington	Sustainable First Choice	Wellington Railway Station
Chard, Crewkerne and Wellington	Sustainable First Choice	Enhanced bus stop facilities between Crewkerne and Yeovil
Chard, Crewkerne and Wellington	Sustainable First Choice	Explore and identify potential for enhanced Chard to Axminster bus/rail integration
Rural	Sustainable First Choice	Enhancement of bus stop facilities at stops on frequent services
Rural	Sustainable First Choice	Expansion of Slinky DRT services
Rural	Sustainable First Choice	Somerton Rural Mobility Hub
Rural	Sustainable First Choice	Develop proposals for railway stations at Langport and/or Somerton

Figures 19 and 20, below summarises these high level actions in relation to bus and rail.

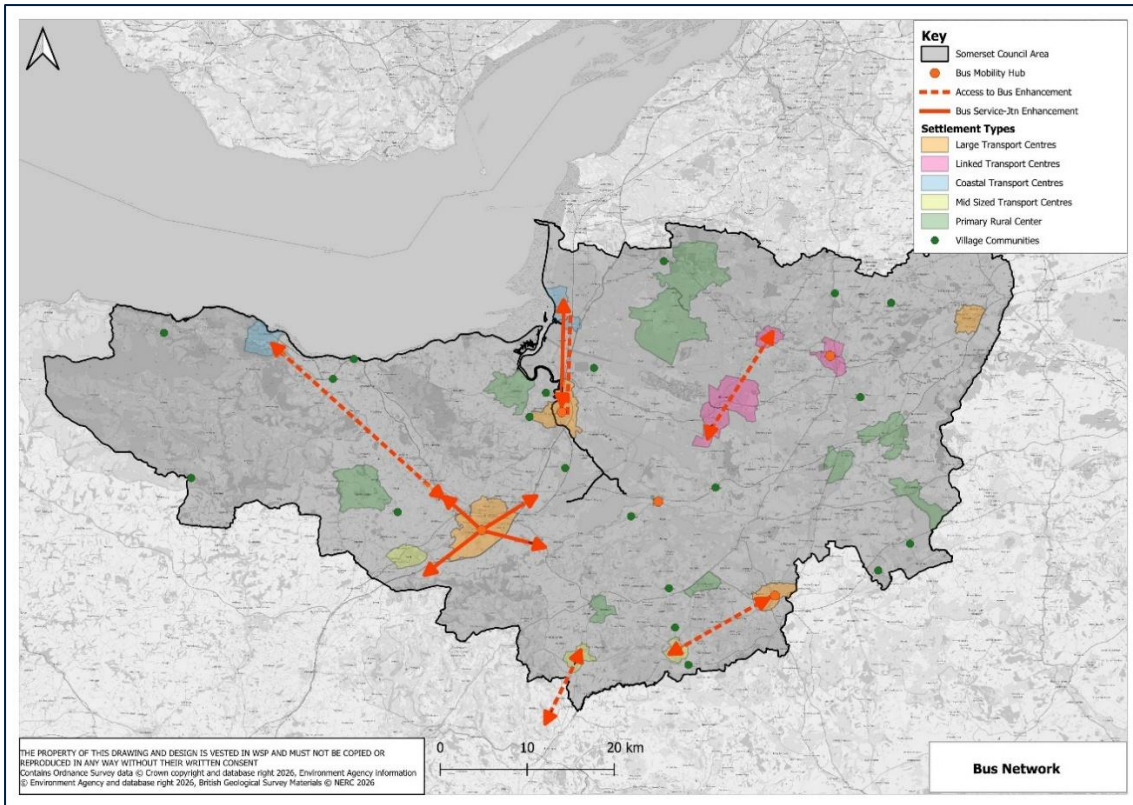


Figure 19 - Bus related actions as part of the emerging Local Transport Plan

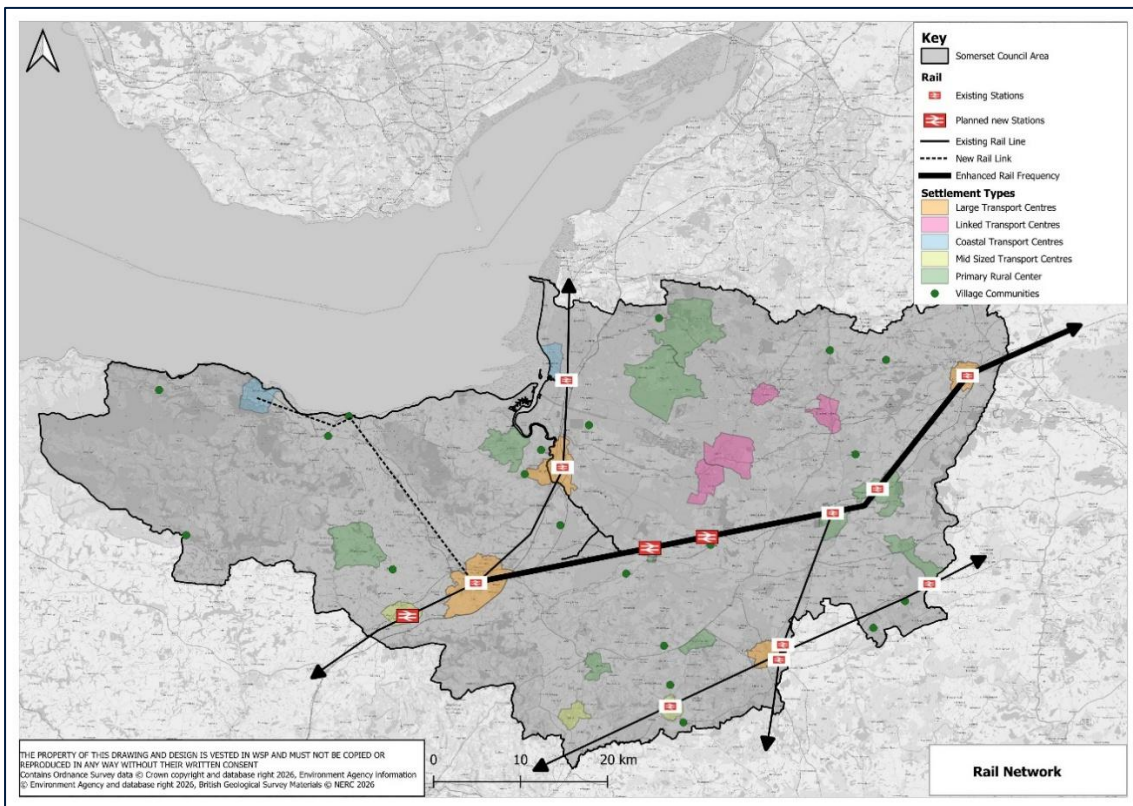


Figure 20 - Rail related actions as part of the emerging Local Transport Plan

Consultation on the draft LTP further highlighted areas where improved public transport connectivity is aspired to by communities:

General

- Many areas lack any service, particularly villages like East Huntspill, Martock, and Coleford.
- Support for small, flexible bus services tailored to rural needs.
- Reopen disused rail stations (e.g., Lympsham Halt).
- Strong demand for more frequent, reliable, and affordable bus services, especially in rural areas.
- Calls for evening and Sunday services, and better integration with rail stations.
- Frustration with bus cancellations, poor timetables, and lack of accessibility.
- Suggestions for EV buses, minibus services, and Somerset-wide integrated ticketing.
- Calls for hourly bus services, evening and weekend coverage, and direct links to hospitals, schools, and employment hubs.
- Criticism of demand-responsive transport (DDRT) as impractical for daily needs.
- Poor links between Somerset towns (e.g. Yeovil and Taunton) and nearby cities (e.g. Bristol, Bath, Exeter).
- Complaints about infrequent, unreliable buses, especially in areas like Priorswood and Henlade

Reliability & Punctuality

- Frequent cancellations and delays.
- Lack of confidence in buses arriving on time.
- Poor coordination with train services.

Frequency & Coverage

- Infrequent services, especially in rural areas.
- Limited evening and Sunday services.
- Requests for more direct routes and express services.

Accessibility & Inclusion

- Poor access for villages and estates.
- Lack of wheelchair-friendly buses.
- Need for smaller vehicles in low-demand areas.

Information & Communication

- Outdated or missing timetables at stops.
- Confusing or inaccurate online information.
- Strong demand for real-time tracking and digital displays.

Affordability

- Bus fares often more expensive than driving.
- Support for fare caps and discounted passes (e.g. for students, key workers, over-60s).

Integration & Connectivity

- Poor links to hospitals, train stations, and employment hubs.
- Desire for integrated ticketing across operators.
- Suggestions for park & ride and shuttle services.

Infrastructure & Comfort

- Requests for cleaner, more comfortable buses.
- Better shelters and signage at stops.
- Electrification and environmental improvements.

Equity & Fairness

- Perceived neglect of rural communities.
- Frustration with prioritisation of tourists over locals.
- Calls for public control or better regulation of private operators.

In response to the above, the map in Figure 21 was developed, trying to visualise existing higher frequency public transport corridors, and aspirations for future corridors as identified through early engagement work, emerging LTP actions and comments on the consultation draft LTP. This portrays what could inform the next iteration of the public transport corridors spatial strategy option. Within the map, existing corridors are identified in green, with stronger/higher frequency corridors darker green and less strong/frequent corridors in lighter green. Areas identified in yellow indicate potential future corridors.

Potential further iteration of the Public Transport Corridors option

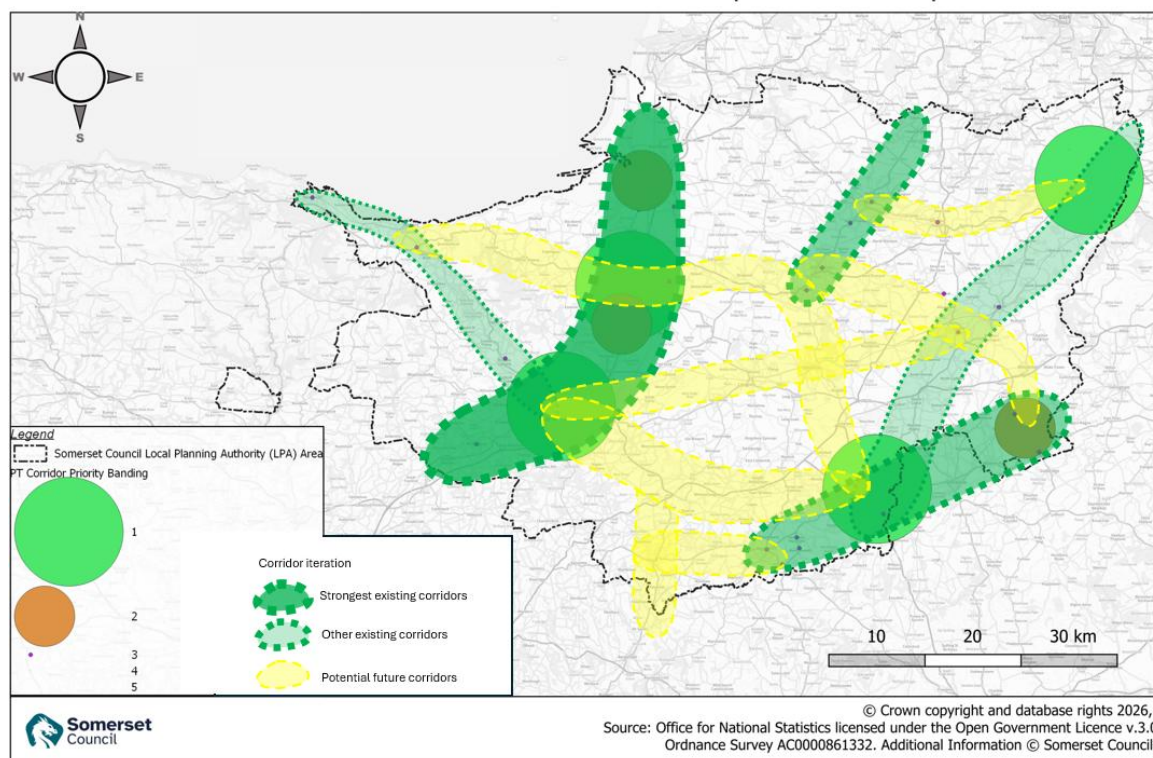


Figure 21 - Potential further iteration of the Public Transport Corridors option

A key next step for the LTP is the development of a Connectivity Plan, aimed at identifying the specific projects needed to deliver the improved connectivity between places that communities want to see, where this aligns with the LTP vision. It will be imperative that officers from the LPA and LTA work closely together to ensure that this Connectivity Plan strongly supports the direction of travel for the new Local Plan. It will be essential to evolve and iterate this spatial strategy option alongside this.

Ecological sensitivity

NPPF policy S1 requires plans to meet the development needs of their area by providing for objectively assessed needs and any needs which cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless the presence of areas or assets of particular importance provide a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development, or the adverse impacts of doing so would substantially outweigh the benefits of doing so.⁷⁰ NPPF policy S2 further expects a plan's spatial strategy to identify land which is protected or proposed to be enhanced and which places limits on acceptability of development proposals.⁷¹ NPPF policy N1 expects plans to safeguard and enhance the natural environment and reflect wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services, steering development to utilise land of least environmental value including by avoiding and minimising harm to designated sites of importance for nature.⁷²

Somerset is an extremely ecologically diverse place. The Somerset State of Nature Report⁷³ produced by Somerset Wildlife Trust provides startling information about the species found across Somerset, distribution, abundance and notable trends. It documents the decline of individual species and populations as well as more generally nature across Somerset, how this fits with national and global change, and what the key drivers are (including habitat loss and fragmentation and a range of pollution sources, which are closely linked to poorly located, designed or implemented new development and urbanisation).

The Somerset Local Nature Recovery Plan (LNRS)⁷⁴ sets out a vision for nature's recovery here in Somerset. The Council's Executive resolved to approve publication of the LNRS on 11th March 2026.⁷⁵ As such, in line with the Planning Practice Guidance, the LNRS is a material consideration in planning, and the new Local Plan must take it into account in its development. The LNRS, and accompanying implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) enable a step change in how new development responds to the natural world, creating the opportunities for new development to not only mitigate its impacts, but genuinely deliver net gains and

⁷⁰ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy S1

⁷¹ Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy S2

⁷² Consultation draft NPPF (2025), Policy N1

⁷³ Somerset Wildlife Trust (2023) Somerset State of Nature Report, available at <https://www.somersetwildlife.org/stateofnature2023>

⁷⁴ Somerset Council (2025) Local Nature Recovery Strategy, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-nature-recovery-strategy/>

⁷⁵ Somerset Council (2026), Decision Details: Somerset Local Nature Recovery Strategy, available at <https://somerset.moderngov.co.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=2250>

overall improvements to nature recovery here in Somerset. The LNRS identifies both Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIB) and Areas which Could Become Important (ACBI). At the time of writing, the final mapping of these areas has not yet been published. However, once published, these can be used to further guide consideration of the impacts of spatial strategy and site selection options.

The Council as LPA is required to conserve and enhance biodiversity through the exercise of its functions as part of the statutory Biodiversity Duty.⁷⁶ This means the Council must actively consider how it is conserving and enhancing biodiversity in the preparation of the new Local Plan, determine the policies and specific objectives it considers appropriate to do so, and take such actions it considers appropriate, in light of these, to further that objective.

Existing regulatory regimes are designed to ensure that new development does not cause significant harm without justification. The mitigation hierarchy is strongly embedded in legislation, national policy and guidance, ensuring that plans and proposals first avoid adverse impacts, then if necessary mitigate any remaining impacts to avoid, cancel or reduce significant effects. Only where mitigation is not possible is compensation allowed. The introduction of BNG is in addition to these existing safeguards.

A key regulatory regime relating to ecological sensitivity and impacts is that of the Habitat Regulations.⁷⁷ Under Regulation 63 of the Habitat Regulations, the Council as competent authority must, before deciding to undertake, or give any consent, permission or other authorisation for, a plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site, make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of that site's conservation objectives. European sites are defined as being:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- Sites of Community Importance (SCIs)
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs)
- Potential SPAs
- Possible / proposed SACs
- Listed and proposed Ramsar Sites (wetland of international importance), and
- Sites identified or required as compensation measures for adverse effects on the above.

Figure 22, below, identifies the location of relevant European sites within and nearby Somerset.

⁷⁶ S.40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) as amended by the Environment Act 2021, available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/section/40>

⁷⁷ Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017), available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents>

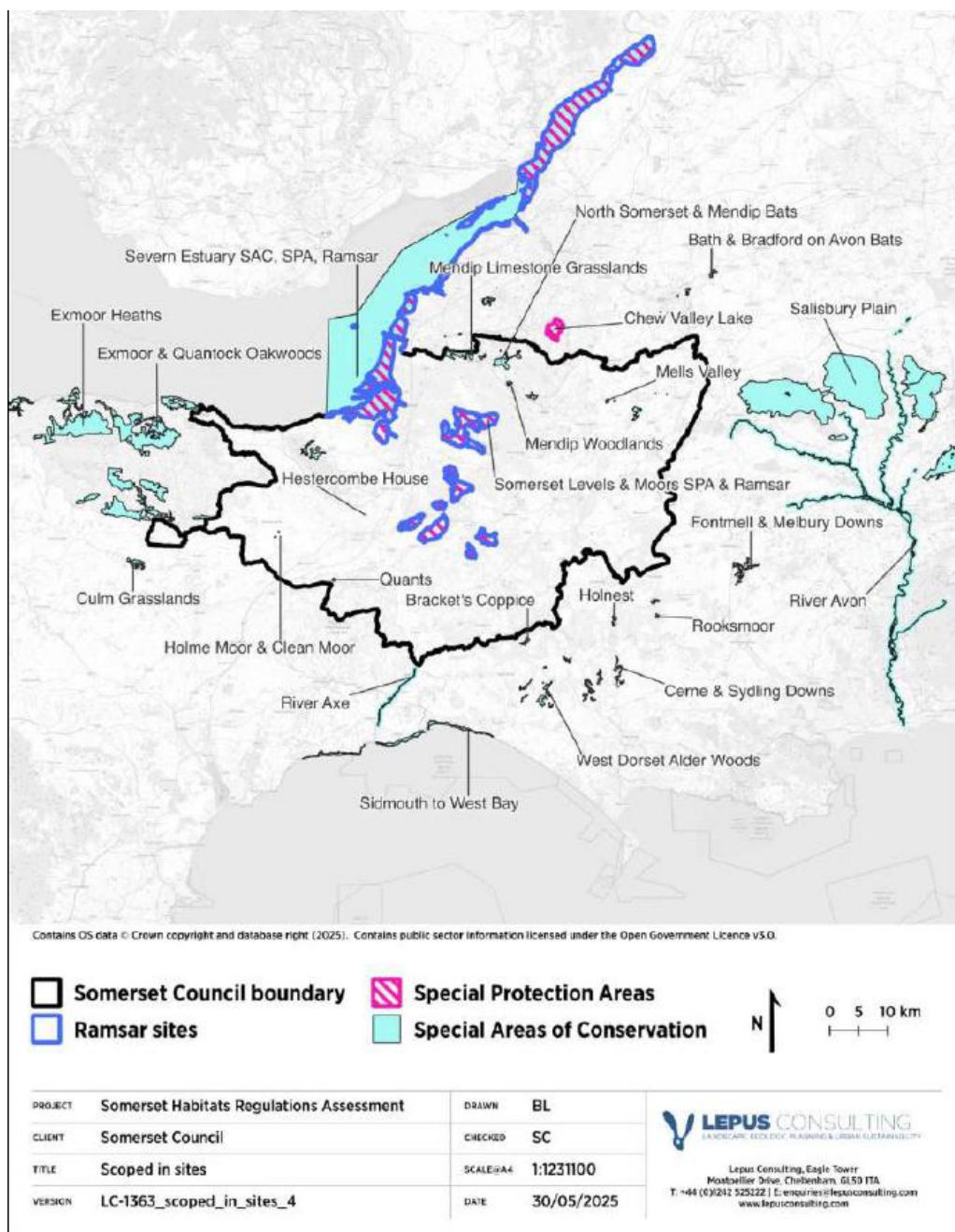


Figure 22 - Location of relevant European Sites within and nearby to Somerset (taken from the HRA Screening and Scoping Report produced by Lepus Consulting)⁷⁸

There are numerous known and applicable Habitat Regulations issues affecting development in Somerset. Most of these are limited in nature and the scale of locations that are affected by the constraint do to the nature of the pathways and receptors involved. Furthermore, in the most part, there are workable solutions and measures that are well matured to assist in avoiding significant effects. For example there are numerous SACs across Somerset which relate to bat species and associated significant effects upon the habitat they rely upon. However, the areas

⁷⁸ Lepus Consulting Ltd on behalf of Somerset Council (2025), Habitat Regulations Assessment of the Somerset Local Plan: Screening & Scoping Report, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/evidence-base/>

affected are limited in scale to quite localised and specific areas, and mitigation proposals are well understood. It will be important for the new Local Plan to take these into account, and work in line with the mitigation hierarchy to ensure that in the first instance development is directed to areas that can avoid likely significant effects. However, due to the above, these are considered best dealt with through site assessment work and policy development rather than spatial strategy.

The exception to this rule is in relation to water quality and in particular the issue of phosphate levels within the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar, River Axe SAC and associated river catchments. Whilst the potential for water quality impacts to affect the Somerset Levels and Moors and River Axe has been understood for some time, it has only been in the last few years that this has become a major issue and new development has been explicitly linked to likely significant effects, following the Dutch N Case. As a result of this, new development which may lead to additional phosphates within the catchment of the Somerset Levels and Moors or the River Axe must now be subject to Habitat Regulations Assessment and demonstrate nutrient neutrality. Further information about phosphates and the approach to nutrient neutrality can be found on the Councils website at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/phosphates-on-the-somerset-levels-and-moors-ramsar-site/> and <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/river-axe-special-area-of-conservation/>.

The river catchments of the River Axe, Parrett, Tone and Brue are of relevance. As shown in Figure 23, below, these catchments are extensive, covering a significant proportion of the LPA area and including high growth areas within existing spatial strategies.

Nutrient Neutrality Catchments affecting development in Somerset

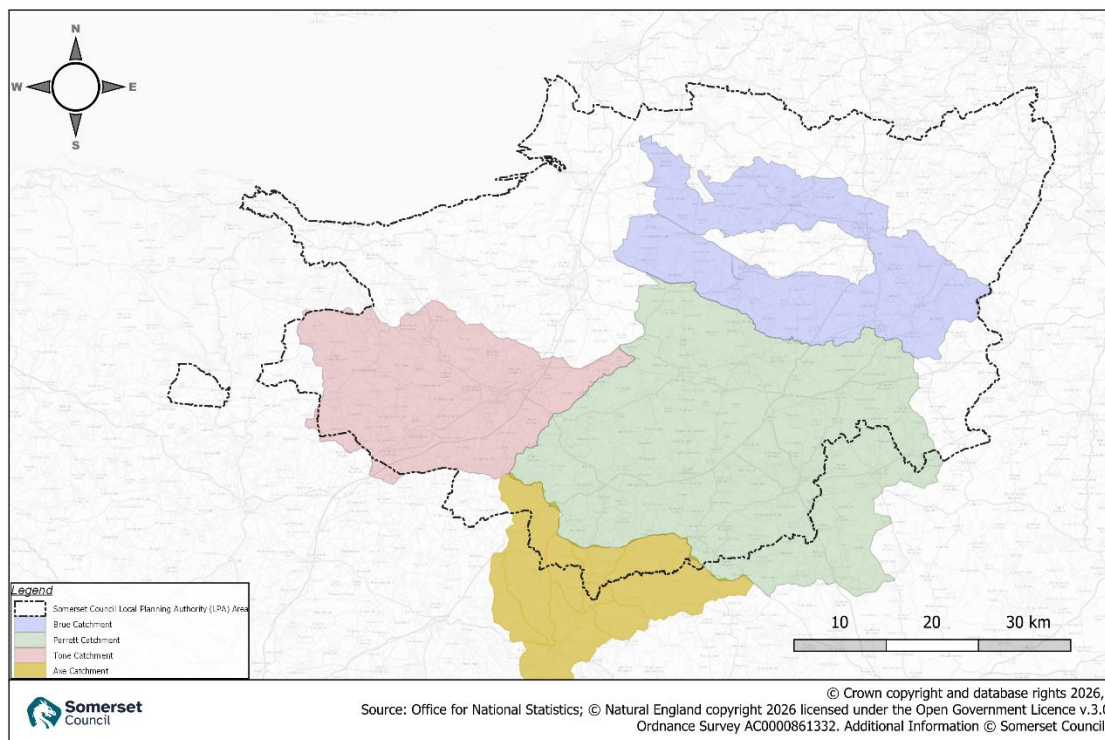


Figure 23 - Nutrient neutrality catchments affecting Somerset

Furthermore, whilst nutrient mitigation schemes are now established, both in terms of the private market and schemes run by Somerset Council, the long-term mitigation strategy, and future projects to help the Somerset Levels and Moors and the River Axe recover to good condition will require significant further work. As such, and given the extent of the area affected, it was considered reasonable to at least consider a spatial strategy option which completely avoided development within the affected river catchments.

This approach would reduce the number of settlements able to be considered for accommodating growth from 176 (all settlements within the settlement hierarchy) down to just 72, lying outside of the river catchments. It would mean that out of the top two tiers, no development could be proposed at Taunton, Yeovil, Wellington, Crewkerne, Glastonbury, Shepton Mallett, Street or Wells. Of those settlements in tier 1 or 2, just Bridgwater, Frome, Minehead & Alcombe, Highbridge & Burnham, Cheddar and Wincanton would be eligible to take growth. With this being the case, and the scale of the plan housing requirement in mind, this would place significant pressure upon these remaining settlements to accommodate significant growth.

In order to establish what a reasonable option for this might look like, different sub-options were considered in relation to how the requirement could be distributed across the remaining settlements. These options considered distributing growth via the settlement hierarchy tiers in line with:

- The existing Sedgemoor spatial strategy (considering most settlements outside of the affected areas are within Sedgemoor)
- Using the aggregated role forward option (see above)
- Using a bespoke distribution to spread more of the top tier requirements out amongst lower tiers (considering in this scenario there is just one settlement in the top tier – Bridgwater).

Table 23, below shows how these sub-options stacked up.

Table 23 - Sub-options considered in developing a spatial strategy option relating to development outside of nutrient neutrality catchments

Tier	Settlements remaining in tier	Sedgemoor roll forward		Aggregated roll forward		Bespoke	
		%	Requirement per settlement	%	Requirement per settlement	%	Requirement per settlement
Tier 1	1	60	45,228	48	36,182	30	22,614
Tier 2	5	15	2,261	29	4,372	35	5,277
Tier 3	10	13	980	10	754	15	1,131
Tier 4	32	10	236	10	236	15	353
Open Country side	24	2	44	3	67	5	157

The bespoke option was taken forward as part of the initial long-list of options for consideration, as this was felt to be the most reasonable option of the three. This is summarised and presented in Figure 24, below:

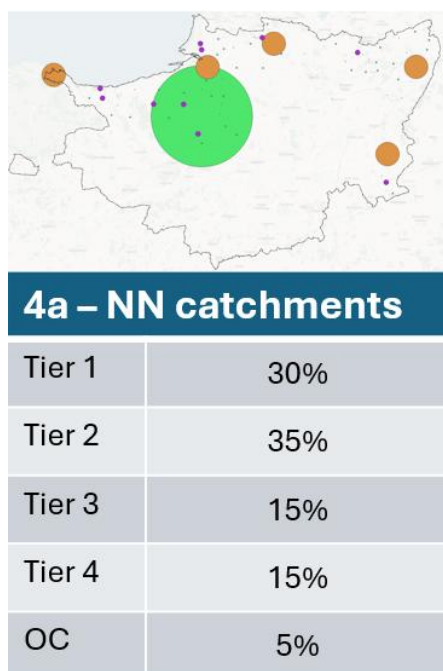


Figure 24 - Spatial strategy option derived from consideration of nutrient neutrality catchments

However, in all cases, the figure for Bridgwater, as the sole remaining tier 1 settlement would be completely undeliverable within a 20-year period. If the percentage attributed to tier 1 in the bespoke scenario were reduced to something potentially more manageable like 20% (15,076), this would consequently push the figures up for remaining settlements in lower tiers which would already be saddled with undeliverable requirements in many cases.

The conclusion of this, was that, firstly, for the purposes of HRA, it would not be possible to completely avoid locating development in the catchments of the Somerset Levels and Moors and Axe, and secondly, that it would be unreasonable to consider such a scenario as a reasonable alternative. As such, this option was not taken any further forward.

The new Local Plan will be subject to Habitat Regulations Assessment. An early HRA Screening and Scoping Report has been produced, which helps to clarify the sites and impact pathways likely to be associated with implementation of the Somerset Local Plan, and as such should be scoped in for this assessment as follows:

- **Air quality:** Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC. Culm Grasslands SAC; Exmoor and Quantock Oakwoods SAC, Exmoor Heaths SAC, Mendip Limestone Grassland SAC, Mendip Woodlands SAC, North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC, River Axe SAC, Rocksmoor SAC, Severn Estuary SAC, SPA and Ramsar, Sidmouth to West Bay SAC and Somerset Levels and Moors SPA and Ramsar.

- **Water quality and quantity:** Bracket's Coppice SAC, Chew Valley Lake SPA, Culm Grasslands SAC, Exmoor Heaths SAC, Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC, Holme Moor and Clean Moor SAC, Holnest SAC, River Avon SAC, River Axe SAC, Rocksmoor SAC, Severn Estuary SAC, SPA and Ramsar, Sidmouth to West Bay SAC, Somerset Levels and Moors SPA and Ramsar and West Dorset Alder Woods SAC.
- **Recreational pressure:** Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, Cerne and Sydling Downs SAC, Chew Valley Lake SPA; Exmoor Heaths SAC, Fontmell and Melbury Downs SAC, Hestercombe House SAC, Mells Valley SAC, Mendip Limestone Grassland SAC, Mendip Woodlands SAC, North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC, River Avon SAC, Severn Estuary SAC, SPA and Ramsar and Somerset Levels and Moors SPA and Ramsar.
- **Urbanisation effects:** Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, Bracket's Coppice SAC, Exmoor and Quantock Oakwoods SAC, Exmoor Heaths SAC, Hestercombe House SAC, Holme Moor and Clean Moor SAC, Mells Valley SAC, Mendip Limestone Grassland SAC, Mendip Woodlands SAC, North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC, Severn Estuary SAC, SPA and Ramsar and Somerset Levels and Moors SPA and Ramsar.

The relative impact in relation to each of the above will differ depending upon the chosen spatial strategy for the plan, as each option will place different amounts of development in closer or more distant proximity to the relevant pathways and receptors. As such, the HRA Screening and Scoping Report undertook an initial screening assessment of Likely Significant Effects for each of the six emerging core spatial strategy options. This will be used to help inform early spatial strategy option iteration and refinement, and the move towards a preferred spatial strategy.

Opportunities

There are key opportunities around Somerset which are useful to consider in terms of how they could influence spatial strategy options for the new local plan. In particular these can be summarised as being:

- Areas of least constraint
- Regional and national connectivity
- Economic opportunities
- Infrastructure capacity

Areas of least constraint

By overlaying Somerset with key constraints, this could (in theory) identify some areas of least constraint. This could be based on:

- Applying the tier 1 'clip' constraints used in the site assessment work⁷⁹ alongside National Landscapes, as shown in Figure 25:

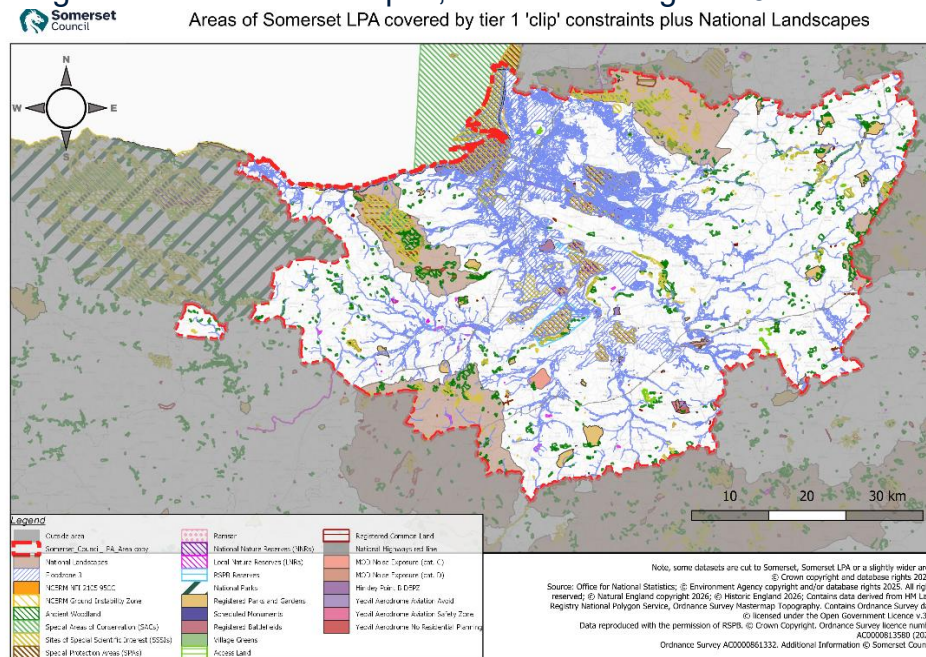


Figure 25 - Areas of Somerset covered by tier 1 'clip' constraints plus National Landscapes

- Adding in 2km buffers of Exmoor National Park and National Landscapes and areas of the Bristol and Bath Green Belt, as shown in Figure 26;

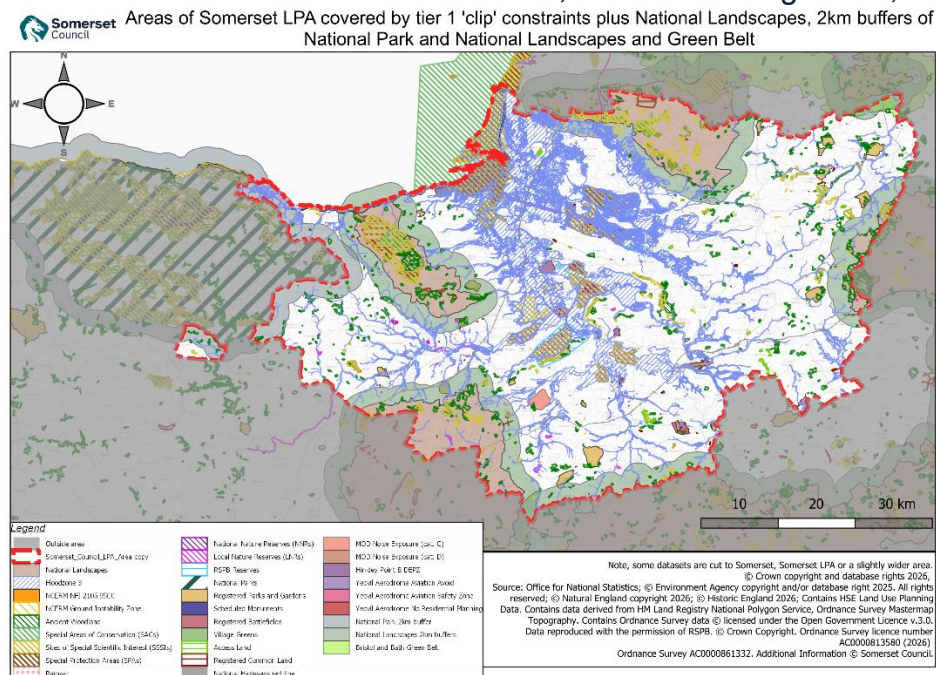


Figure 26 - Areas of Somerset covered by tier 1 'clip' constraints, National Landscapes, 2km buffers of National Landscapes and National Park, and Green Belt

⁷⁹ Flood Zone 3, National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping 2105 (95CC) and Ground Instability Zone, Ancient Woodland, SACs, SSSIs, SPAs, Ramsar sites, NNRs, LNRs, RSPB Reserves, National Park, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Battlefields, Registered Village Greens, Access Land, Registered Common Land, National Highways red line, HSE high pressure gas line and Hazardous Installations (inner zone), MOD Noise Exposure C&D, Hinkley Point B Detailed Emergency Planning Zone, Yeovil Aerodrome Safety Zones. Note some not shown due to licensing.

This approach would involve applying some select constraints that have a slightly more subjective application (e.g. landscape sensitivity), that could potentially be mitigatable (e.g. phosphates, bat consultation zones), and which are national policy (green belt). It would provide a view of the areas of potentially less constraint / risk in relation to select issues, but would not be realistic of where development could actually take place.

Having applied all of these constraints, the only area remaining relatively free of constraint would be around Wincanton and eastern South Somerset. However, this would ignore a whole host of other potential constraints which may all be of high relevance in the remaining area such as in relation to wider landscape sensitivity, infrastructure capacity, accessibility and connectivity etc.. It would also assume that in areas which might be less affected by these other potential constraints, that they would be outweighed by those constraints which had already been mapped and applied. In reality, many of these constraints can only really be assessed and weighed up on a site-by-site basis.

As such, this was not considered to, on its own, represent a reasonable way of identifying a spatial strategy. Instead, it was felt better left to site assessment work to help understand constraints, and how to balance between them.

Regional and national connectivity

Whilst much of Somerset is rural, and has generally poor connectivity, there are exceptions. The M5, A303/A358, Bristol to Exeter Line, Reading to Taunton Line and West of England Line in particular bring important regional and national connectivity. Taunton benefits greatly from these connections, being at the nexus of a number of them. However, Bridgwater, Yeovil and Highbridge & Burnham each benefit from two of these, and a number of places benefit from being located with good access to one or another. This is demonstrated in Table 24 below.

Table 24 - Table identifying settlements in close proximity to nationally significant road and rail infrastructure as a proxy for comparative regional and national connectivity

Settlement	M5	A303/A358	Bristol to Exeter Line	Reading to Taunton Line	West of England Line
Taunton	X	X	X	X	
Bridgwater	X		X		
Yeovil		X			X
Highbridge & Burnham	X		X		
Frome				X	
Castle Cary				X	
Bruton				X	
Crewkerne					X
Templecombe					X
Wellington	X		(x)		

North Petherton	X				
Puriton	X				
Ruishton	X	X			
Ilminster		X			
South Petherton		X			
Stoke Sub Hamdon		X			
Ilchester		X			
Sparkford		X			
Wincanton		X			

This could present a way of defining a spatial strategy option. However, it is to an extent closely related to existing spatial strategy options discussed above. Furthermore, an over-reliance upon general, regional or national connectivity, neglects to take sufficient account of more local connectivity needs and sustainable transport options such as active travel and wider public transport. As such, this was not considered to, on its own, represent a reasonable way of identifying a distinct spatial strategy option, as it is already accounted for by existing spatial strategies and doesn't balance local connectivity or lever the focus on sustainable modes.

Economic opportunities

The Economic Prosperity Strategy focuses principally on building on our distinctive assets and opportunities for economic transformation.⁸⁰

- Clean energy innovation - Bridgwater - Hinkley – Gravity
- Aerospace and defence – Yeovil
- Digital and data - Taunton - Bridgwater - Gravity

These tend to be focused around the main settlements. However, the quantum of inward investment taking place around Gravity, and associated and anticipated spin-offs including around data centre opportunities, leveraging enhanced energy, digital and transport infrastructure and wider legacies associated with the Gravity and Hinkley projects, means that there could be growth opportunities relating to the existing settlements of Puriton and Woolavington in particular.

The existing Sedgemoor spatial strategy did not plan for significant housing growth in these settlements as the economic opportunities were not fully clear at the point at which the plan was being developed.

Other spatial strategy options discussed in this paper could in theory support greater growth at these settlements, not least the Jobs Opportunity Focus option.

⁸⁰ Somerset Council (2025) Somerset Economic Prosperity Strategy 2025-2045, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/business-economy-and-licences/somerset-economic-prosperity-strategy-2025-2045/>

As this opportunity is quite focused in its location, it was considered most appropriate to explore incorporation of the opportunity into further iteration of the Jobs Opportunity Focus option, rather than developing it as a standalone spatial strategy option.

Infrastructure capacity

The issue of identifying a spatial strategy in relation to infrastructure capacity is discussed further above. Whilst data on where existing infrastructure is located is easy to come by, data on capacity is more complex, often needing to be determined at the point in time that development is coming forward, or providers having obligations upon them to accommodate new development. As such, it was generally considered better dealt with as part of site assessments and refinement of potential options with the exception of public transport.

Call for Sites

Chapter 2 of the consultation draft NPPF (2025) clearly sets out that the objective of the Plan-making policies is to create a system which is genuinely plan-led. A key aspect of this is in local influence and plans directing growth to the most appropriate and sustainable locations. As such, whilst land availability for development is a key consideration on being able to demonstrate deliverability of a plan and its spatial strategy, it should not alone be the core driver for setting the strategy.

The Council undertook a Call for Sites in early 2025⁸¹. As a result of this, a total of 1,357 sites were submitted, and (once adding other sites received during the 2023 Mendip Call for Sites exercise, and existing adopted site allocations and Local Development Orders), a total of 1,626 sites were initially assessed for the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). These sites are distributed across Somerset. As submitted, these sites do not present a reasonable way of determining a spatial strategy option, as many sites or parts of sites will not be considered, suitable, available or achievable.

The Local Plan site assessment process (which is broadly set out within the HELAA report⁸²) is an iterative one, where the assessment of those sites left in the process gradually gets more detailed and thorough. It initially focuses on filtering out non-starters and gradually layers in constraints as more is understood about site details, mitigation potential etc. The initial HELAA assessments identify whether sites are 'unsuitable', 'potentially unsuitable' or 'potentially suitable' for different uses, whether they are available for those uses, and whether development of the site for that use might be achievable. Those sites considered to be 'potentially suitable' or 'potentially unsuitable', available and achievable for a particular use, will progress for more

⁸¹ Somerset Council (2025) Local Plan Call for Sites, available at

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/local-plan-call-for-sites/>

⁸² See the HELAA report at <https://placemaker.somerset.urbanintelligence.co.uk/p/document/4> for further information on methodology and process

detailed consideration and assessment, as part of an initial process of beginning to identify potential site options for the local plan.

All those sites progressing, or possibly just those sites identified as ‘potentially suitable’ could potentially be considered as an early indicator of a reasonable alternative spatial strategy option. However, the HELAA assessments are very high level in nature and subject to a number of caveats. As such it is considered that these outputs are still not discreet enough to define an option just yet. It may be more appropriate to consider a spatial strategy defined solely by developable or deliverable sites, or a further filter following more detailed assessment.

The HELAA Report details that of the 1,626 sites which entered the HELAA process:

- 946 sites have been identified as being ‘Potentially Suitable’ or ‘Potentially Unsuitable’, Available and Achievable for **residential development**. These could *theoretically* accommodate some 164,696 dwellings.
- 273 sites have been identified as being ‘Potentially Suitable’ or ‘Potentially Unsuitable’, Available and Achievable for **economic development**. These could *theoretically* accommodate some 2,105,929 sqm of employment floorspace.
- 115 sites have been identified as being ‘Potentially Suitable’ or ‘Potentially Unsuitable’, Available and Achievable for **renewable energy development**. These have not been assessed for capacity as this is highly dependent upon the technology pursued and detailed constraint and opportunity analysis.

However, the capacity outputs are heavily caveated as being the product of generic capacity assessment, including some sites that may in time be considered unsuitable, assume the whole site is used for just one development type, ignores more detailed constraints and policy requirements, and includes partial duplicates which distort the overall output. Despite these caveats, it is indicative that there is likely to be some level of choice arising from the HELAA outputs in relation site selection when compared to the overarching plan period requirements to plan for 74,920 homes and between 900,000 and 1,160,000 sqm of employment floorspace.

Further consideration will be made of how appropriate it would be to define a spatial strategy option purely around promoted sites as the Local Plan site assessment process evolves.

Duty to Co-operate / cross-boundary issues

The Somerset LPA borders numerous other plan-making authorities:

- Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES)
- Dorset
- East Devon
- Exmoor National Park,
- Mid Devon
- North Devon

- North Somerset
- Wiltshire

Officers have engaged regularly with adjoining authorities through combined and individual meetings as necessary. Through these meetings, it has been identified that the following are key areas with cross-boundary issues which might affect spatial strategy optioneering:

- B&NES – A significant amount of the boundary with B&NES lies within either the Mendip Hills National Landscape or the Bristol and Bath Green Belt. However, the area around the Somer Valley (roughly between Radstock, Midsomer Norton and Farrington Gurney) lies outside of these areas. The emerging B&NES Local Plan⁸³ and West of England Growth Strategy⁸⁴ identify significant growth in and around the Somer Valley as part of the Somer Valley Growth Zone, with some of this growth identified as potentially being located within Somerset, but contributing towards the B&NES housing need. There is a wider political conversation required to understand how Somerset Council will respond to this. However, it points to limited opportunities within the B&NES plan area, and also a recognition of the role and function of Midsomer Norton / Radstock, which populations within that border area of Somerset do rely upon. It might, therefore, be reasonable and appropriate to consider a spatial strategy option which recognises this and places further growth on the Somerset edge of Midsomer Norton / Radstock. The emerging B&NES proposals will rely upon a significant uplift of sustainable transport options in the Somer Valley, and a package of mitigation options is currently being developed. In addition to this, the A37 through Farrington Gurney carries existing relatively frequent bus services from Wells to Bristol. This may itself present opportunities which could be captured within further iteration of the public transport corridors option if considered appropriate.
- Dorset – Much of the western half of the boundary with Dorset lies within the Dorset National Landscape. However, east of A37 Dorchester Road lies outside this constraint. The catchments of the River Parrett and River Axe (both nutrient neutrality catchments) extend beyond the boundaries of Somerset into Dorset along much of the border. Yeovil, Crewkerne, Milborne Port, Templecombe, Misterton, Stoford, Tatworth and Henstridge are all located close to the Dorset border. Close engagement and co-operation will be necessary should the Somerset spatial strategy propose growth in these areas. The border presses right up against the settlement limit of Yeovil. However, the Dorset side of the boundary is relatively constrained in terms of flood risk, topography and landscape setting. A significant site was promoted to the north of Babylon Hill through the Dorset Call for Sites process in 2024,

⁸³ Bath & North East Somerset Council (2025), Local Plan Options Document 2025, available at <https://bathnesplaces.co.uk/localplan/chapters/chapterspage/Chapter%207%20Somer%20Valley.pdf>

⁸⁴ West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (2025) West of England Growth Strategy, available at <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Growth-Strategy-Web.pdf>

although the accompanying SHLAA report⁸⁵ identified the site as unsuitable and it was not included as a site option in the recent Dorset Local Plan Options Consultation⁸⁶. It may therefore be reasonable to assume that whilst possible, it is unlikely to be a significant source of direct impact. However, transport and infrastructure considerations are more likely of relevance given the relationship between Yeovil and Sherborne, with a fair amount of reliance between the two settlements, and particularly from Sherborne residents on Yeovil given its jobs. The emerging Dorset local plan identified an expansion to the existing Gibbs Marsh Trading Estate, south of Henstridge Airfield, as an option for future employment land. Henstridge Airfield has long been subject to development pressure, hence Policy EP6 of the adopted South Somerset Local Plan and the adopted Henstridge Airfield Masterplan⁸⁷. In addition to this, the presence of the West of England rail line, and existing bus routes between Yeovil, Sherborne, Milborne Port, Henstridge and Stalbridge mean that there are some important cross-boundary public transport corridors in this area. This may present opportunities which could be captured within further iteration of the public transport corridors option if considered appropriate.

- East Devon – Much of the border with East Devon is contained within the Blackdown Hills National Landscape and as such there is very limited opportunity for growth. Much of the border area is located within the catchment of the River Axe (a nutrient neutrality catchment. Chard and Tatworth are located close-by and there is a relationship between these areas and Axminster both for jobs, services and facilities as well as in accessing the rail network at Axminster. Engagement on the Local Transport Plan identified a need to strengthen connectivity from Chard to Axminster. This may present opportunities which could be captured within further iteration of the public transport corridors option if considered appropriate.
- Exmoor National Park – Due to the nature of the National Park there is very limited opportunity for growth within adjoining areas. However, importantly Minehead, which is identified as a Tier 2 settlement in Somerset’s Settlement Role and Function Study, is located immediately adjacent to the Park. Options for growth around Minehead will have to be considered and managed carefully in discussion with ENPA to avoid, minimise and mitigate potential impacts. However, Minehead’s areas for growth would not only be limited by proximity and impact upon the Park (particularly to the south and west), but also Heritage Coast designation to the West and the sea, coastal change and flood risk to the north and east. Previous West Somerset Local Plans have found it challenging to identify suitable areas for growth. Given the enhanced duty now placed upon the Council to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Parks when

⁸⁵ Dorset Council (2024) Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, available at <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/land-availability>

⁸⁶ Dorset Council (2025) Local Plan Options Consultation, available at <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/dorset-council-local-plan-options-consultation-2025>

⁸⁷ South Somerset District Council (2009) Masterplan for the Future Development of Henstridge Airfield, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/other-design-and-technical-guidance/>

exercising any function that may affect it, this is likely to highly constrain the quantum of development that Minehead is able to accommodate as part of any spatial strategy. This level of constraint is to an extent recognised by the existing spatial strategy for West Somerset (and as such by the Combined Roll Forward option) which plans for limited growth, despite it being the former district's principal settlement, and Real World Delivery option, which recognises the low levels of delivery in West Somerset over the past 10 years. The Climate Resilience option also recognises some of the constraints on Minehead placed by climate change. As this issue is quite focused in its location and to an extent the constraints on Minehead are reflected by these other options, it was considered most appropriate to explore incorporation of the constraint into further iteration of these options and preferred option going forward.

- Mid Devon – The boundary with Mid Devon stretches from the upper reaches of the Exe Valley, south of Exmoor in the north-west, across the rolling rural landscape forming the watershed between the Exe and Tone catchments, across the main south-west communications corridor (M5, A38, Bristol & Exeter Railway, former Grand Western Canal and National Grid Transmission network), and off into the Blackdown Hills National Landscape and headwaters of the River Culm in the south-east. The majority of this border is unlikely to be subject to significant development pressure due to its rurality (with poor transport accessibility) and its landscape designations. However, the main south-west communications corridor may have some greater development pressure, though this is primarily focused on Wellington on the Somerset side, and Tiverton Parkway/Junction 27 on the Mid Devon side. The main opportunity in this area would be around the rail network and potential for enhanced bus services. This may present opportunities which could be captured within further iteration of the public transport corridors option if considered appropriate.
- North Devon – The vast majority of the border between Somerset and North Devon lies within Exmoor National Park. However, a small area west / south-west of Dulverton does bound the Somerset LPA. This area is intensely rural and has poor accessibility and high landscape sensitivity. It is therefore extremely unlikely to have any relationship with potential spatial strategy options for either Somerset or North Devon.
- North Somerset – The majority of the boundary with North Somerset is located within the Mendip Hills National Landscape and formed by the northern escarpment to the Mendip Hills. As such, there is very limited opportunity for growth. The areas outside of the National Landscape correspond to the main south-west communications corridor formed by the M5, A38 (although this does cross into the National Landscape near the border), Bristol & Exeter Railway and National Grid Distribution network. This corridor is in close proximity to Weston-Super-Mare, which provides a wide range of services and facilities to residents in this part of Somerset. However, the majority of this area is very low-lying and subject to significant fluvial flood risk which will only increase with climate change. The area of this corridor

which is not so affected by flood risk, lies along the A38 heading from Junction 22, towards Bristol Airport, nearby to Axbridge and Cross. This area may have some development pressure, though it is not clearly related to any settlements. If anything, opportunities here might be related to improving public transport services between Somerset and Bristol Airport, though this is possibly tentative at best. The emerging North Somerset Local Plan⁸⁸ proposes some growth around Winscombe, Sandford, Churchill and Langford, though this is not of such a quantum likely to lead to a step change in accessibility options in this area. This may present opportunities which could be captured within further iteration of the public transport corridors option if considered appropriate.

- Wiltshire – The vast majority of the border between Somerset and Wiltshire lies within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape, with the exception of the area between Longleat Woods (south-east of Frome) and Farleigh Hungerford. However, the area immediately around Farleigh Hungerford is part of the Bristol and Bath Green Belt. The remaining area east of Rode, Beckington and Frome is less constrained on these grounds and is also fairly well connected from a strategic highways perspective, being served by the A36 and A361, as well as being in fairly close proximity to jobs in nearby Westbury, Trowbridge and Warminster, as well as being not that far from Bath. Frome and nearby Norton St Philip have been subject of significant development pressure in recent years. However, the majority of the opportunities here are likely to relate to improved public transport corridors. The Reading to Taunton Railway line runs through this area, though Frome is less well served by this than it could be. A high frequency bus service also links Frome with Trowbridge via Beckington and Rode. This may present opportunities which could be captured within further iteration of the public transport corridors option if considered appropriate.

In addition to this, with the advent of Spatial Development Strategies, it is currently anticipated that Somerset will be required to develop a Spatial Development Strategy for the Wessex area with Wiltshire, Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. This grouping may present specific considerations for spatial strategy development in due course. Somerset will also border other SDS areas including around the West of England authorities and Devon authorities. Ongoing engagement will be required with these new groupings.

6. Narrowing down the options

Options considered

The above section explains the process of how and why different spatial strategy options were developed in response to data analysis, early engagement, Duty to Co-

⁸⁸ North Somerset Council (2025) North Somerset Local Plan 2041 - Pre-submission Plan (Reg 19), available at <https://n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/planning-building-control/planning-policy/our-local-plan/local-plan-2041/pre-submission-plan-2041-reg-19-autumn-2025-consultation>

operate discussions and evidence base. As a result of this, a total of 19 initial spatial strategy options were identified across six groupings as part of a long-list, as follows:

Group 1: Urban Focus Roll-Forward

- 1a: Aggregated roll-forward of existing strategies.
- 1b: Combined roll-forward of existing strategies by settlement.
- 1c–1e: Roll-forward of individual district strategies (TDBC, SSDC, SDC).

Group 2: % Growth by Settlement

- 2a: Flat 10% growth
- 2b: Flat 32% growth.
- 2c: Tiered growth (45% Tier 1, 35% Tier 2, 25% Tier 3, 15% Tier 4, 5% Tier 5)

Group 3: Rural Dispersal

- 3a–3c: Increasing levels of growth in rural areas (up to 80%).

Group 4: Topic-Based

- 4a: Outside Nutrient Neutrality catchments.
- 4b: Climate resilience.
- 4c: Public transport corridor focus.
- 4d: Job opportunity focus.

Group 5: New Settlements

- 5a: 10% growth in new settlements.
- 5b: New settlements along PT corridors.

Group 6: Other

- 6: Real-world delivery roll-forward.
- 7: Brownfield-only approach.

Each option was broadly described, and where possible, some initial work was undertaken to calculate potential housing requirements by tier/settlement and visualise them spatially (scale blobs for each settlement).

Internal engagement and strategic alignment

Officers undertook a series of workshops to help define and refine the spatial strategy options for further consideration.

Planning Policy Officer Workshop – In July 2025, Planning Policy officers took part in an internal, officer only workshop to go through the long-list, discuss the overall approach, discuss performance of existing spatial strategies, and begin to consider how each option might fair once sustainability objectives were applied. This process helped to determine which were reasonable to take forward as genuine spatial strategy options to be elaborated on, and which were not. Feedback from this workshop has been incorporated into the topic-based approach in the section above. However, it can be summarised as follows:

As a result of the workshop, the following options were considered likely to be appropriate as reasonable alternatives for further assessment, with some summary officer feedback explaining why:

- **Option 1b – Combined Roll-Forward:** Offers continuity with existing strategies while allowing for tailored growth by settlement.
- **Option 2c – Tiered % Growth:** Provides a more realistic and equitable distribution of growth across settlement tiers, aligning with early engagement feedback.
- **Option 4b – Climate Resilience:** Prioritises long-term sustainability by directing growth away from areas vulnerable to climate change impacts.
- **Option 4c – Public Transport Corridors:** Supports sustainable travel and infrastructure investment by focusing growth along high-frequency PT routes.
- **Option 4d – Job Opportunity Focus:** Aligns housing growth with employment centres, supporting economic development.
- **Option 6 – Real-World Delivery:** Reflects actual delivery trends and market behaviour, offering a pragmatic baseline scenario.

The following options were considered unlikely to be appropriate as reasonable alternatives for further assessment, again with summary officer feedback:

- **Options 1a and 1c-1e – Existing spatial strategies (aggregated and individual):** Not considered appropriate to reflect individual district spatial strategies across the whole county as former district settlement hierarchies and patterns are not reflective of the whole. The aggregated option fails to truly reflect existing strategies and is not the result of considering the issues identified, but a random average between existing strategies without justification.
- **Option 2a – Flat 10% Growth:** Discarded for failing to deliver the required housing numbers.
- **Option 2b – Flat 32% Growth:** Discarded for being unrealistic and failing to account for nuanced constraints applicable to specific settlements.
- **Options 3a–3c – Rural Dispersal:** Not considered to be viable as standalone strategies due to sustainability concerns including failing to lever existing

infrastructure capacity, connectivity and job opportunities, though elements may be integrated into other options.

- **Option 4a – Nutrient Neutrality:** Rejected due to its unrealistic spatial implications and inability to meet housing needs
- **Option 7 – Brownfield Only:** Rejected as would fail to deliver the required housing numbers

The following options were considered likely to be reasonable to remain ‘on the table’, though it was recognised that they could not be spatially defined at the time and as such would be more narrative than definitive at this stage:

- **New Settlements (5a, 5b):** Acknowledged in the narrative as long-term possibilities, but not included in the core set of options due to delivery constraints within the plan period, uncertainty over need and inability to spatially identify implications at this stage. Sites promoted via the Call for Sites may present possible options once assessed, though reviewing areas of least constraint across the area fails to immediately offer any obvious locations.
- **Promoted Sites:** An option based on land availability and Call for Sites submissions will be explored further.

Strategic Direction

- It was considered overall that a **blended strategy** is likely to emerge as the preferred approach, combining the strengths of selected options while mitigating their weaknesses.

Following the internal planning policy officers meeting in July, further work was undertaken to seek inputs and consider issues of strategic alignment with other internal services within the Council. To enable this, the planning policy team attended a number of existing internal officer groups and presented the emerging options and work to date in refining this from an initial long-list:

- **Creating Communities Officer Working Group (CCOWG)** – a cross-service group of officers who meet to ensure a joined up approach to strategic planning, transport, economic, environmental, housing, education and public health policy making, infrastructure investment priorities, delivery on cross-service objectives, and sharing information, data collection and evidence gathering. The team conducted a workshop with this group with wider attendance from representatives of adult and children services, culture and arts, regulatory and operational services, strategic partnerships and estates/property and education on 15th September 2025. The group were encouraged to undertake SWOT analysis of the emerging spatial strategy options, as well as think about and feed back implications for their service areas.
- **Planning Service Meeting** – a meeting held on an ad-hoc basis to communicate important service-wide information. The team attended a

session on 25th September 2025 to present an update on the Local Plan and emerging spatial strategy options.

- **Planning, Transport, Economy and Climate (PTEC)** – an informal grouping of officers from planning, transport, economy and climate who meet regularly to share progress and improve alignment on individual projects as they are progressing. Updates were provided and discussions about alignment, particularly with the team developing the Local Transport Plan in numerous meetings over Autumn/Winter 2025/26.

The team also presented the emerging spatial strategy options to members:

- **All Member briefing** – Ad-hoc sessions where all Members are invited to attend and hear about emerging projects and programmes. A briefing was held on 2nd October 2025 to communicate progress on the Local Plan (timeline, work on the Settlement Role and Function Study, early engagement feedback, latest on HELAA, and the emerging spatial strategy options). Key points/issues raised/discussed in relation to spatial strategy included:
 - **General:**
 - Flood zones, grade 1 agricultural land and national landscapes should be explicitly avoided.
 - What is the definition of the Open Countryside tier? Does this limit our opportunities for rural areas?
 - Rural settlements should not be excluded from growth, as small developments support local builders and help villages remain alive.
 - Higher densities could reduce pressure on greenfield sites and support sustainable transport.
 - **Tiered % growth:**
 - Growth in dwelling numbers was alarming for some settlements.
 - **Climate Resilient:**
 - Recognised the logic of avoiding high-risk locations but raised concerns that this could severely restrict options.
 - **Public Transport corridors:**
 - Concern that if a settlement isn't within an existing or potential corridor, then it could be 'left behind'.
 - Could school catchments be considered as part of this?
 - Concern that we could focus development on infrastructure and services which we don't have any or sufficient control over. Viability of bus routes and pricing of trains a major concern.
 - Currently no PT running from Minehead to Bridgwater, but could this support an opportunity to create such a corridor?
 - **Job opportunities:**
 - Concern that this will lead to no dwellings and death of remote villages.
 - Concern that this could push excessive growth into certain areas (e.g., around Taunton).
 - **Real World Delivery:**

- Rural settlements have taken lots more in recent times because of the lack of 5YHLS and application of the ‘tilted balance’ – this is not an active choice and not necessarily a sustainable model.
- **New settlements:**
 - What would be our definition of these, how would they be identified?
- **Preferred strategy:**
 - Maximise the best parts and minimise the worse parts of each.
- **Procedural:**
 - Concern that leaving spatial strategy communication until we have a preferred option and a Draft Plan at Regulation 18 stage, could be seen as a *fait accompli* by communities and not allow for sufficient influence. Earlier engagement even if targeted with LCN’s parishes would be preferable.
- **Local Plan Member Cross-Party Steering Group** – an informal cross-party group to work with Officers to support the Council’s Local Plan, Local Development Scheme, Development Plan Documents, Supplementary Planning Documents, monitoring documents, and other relevant planning policy documents. The group is advisory only and is comprised of Members drawn from some of the political groups based on the political balance of the Council. The team presented to the Steering Group on 12th November 2025 on a range of matters including the emerging spatial strategy options. Key points/issues raised/discussed included:
 - **General:**
 - Infrastructure first: stressed need to overlay spatial options with schools, health, transport capacity.
 - Community impact: avoid “cliff-edge” growth; consider caps and thresholds for smaller settlements.
 - Climate and Sustainability: must integrate flood risk, carbon reduction, and nature recovery.
 - Cross-Border Connectivity: growth strategy should reflect commuting patterns to Bristol, Westbury, Exeter.
 - Consider overlaying geographic constraints on each option to understand relationship with these.
 - **Combined Roll Forward:**
 - Seen as familiar and politically safer, but risks locking in historic patterns that may not reflect future sustainability needs.
 - Concern that urban concentration (Taunton, Bridgwater, Yeovil) could exacerbate infrastructure deficits and congestion.
 - Some members felt this approach fails to address climate resilience or rural vitality.
 - **Tiered % growth:**
 - Flat % growth (10% or 32%) considered too blunt, ignoring local capacity and constraints.
 - Tiered % growth (e.g., 45% Tier 1, 35% Tier 2, etc.) seen as more nuanced, but still risks overwhelming smaller villages.

- Community character concerns – some villages could double in size, creating social and infrastructure strain.
- Suggested introducing maximum caps alongside minimums to avoid disproportionate impacts.
- **Rural dispersal:**
 - Strong opposition. Considered unsustainable given transport and service limitations.
 - Risks car dependency, undermining climate objectives.
 - Some argued limited dispersal could help support rural services, but consensus was that high dispersal is not viable
- **Climate resilient:**
 - Supported in principle, but warned this could disproportionately penalize Bridgwater, Burnham, Highbridge, Minehead, affecting economic balance.
 - Need to overlay social and economic factors to avoid unintended consequences.
- **Public Transport Corridors:**
 - General transport connectivity is important but the need for public transport is the dominant requirement.
 - Strong support for aligning growth with rail and bus corridors, but recognition that current provision is poor.
 - Consider how connectivity corridors might extend beyond the boundaries of Somerset.
 - Plan can justify investment, but cannot guarantee delivery – risk of aspirational strategy without infrastructure backing.
- **Job opportunities:**
 - Concept welcomed, and proximity to jobs considered still to be important, but concerns about data accuracy (some employment sites underutilized).
 - Suggested refining with future job growth forecasts and economic strategies.
- **Nutrient Neutral:**
 - Growth outside catchments seen as pragmatic, but could limit flexibility and concentrate development in less suitable areas.
- **Real World Delivery:**
 - Based on historic patterns – seen as reflective of market reality, but risks perpetuating unsustainable trends.
 - Questioned whether there could be another option formulated around viability of housing development?
- **Brownfield first:**
 - Strong support for urban intensification, but acknowledged limited capacity and need for urban capacity study.
- **New settlements:**
 - Recognised as potentially being part of a long-term solution, but unlikely to deliver significant homes within plan period.

- Criteria and areas of search should be set now for future-proofing.
- Risk of political sensitivity and high infrastructure costs noted.
- **Preferred strategy:**
 - Blended Approach: Broad consensus that no single option works; preferred strategy will likely combine elements (urban focus + climate resilience + transport corridors + brownfield-first).

Feedback from the above sessions has been taken account of in the appraisal and definition of options as set out in the above section. In general, feedback from sessions supported the options that the initial planning policy officer workshop had identified as being likely appropriate as reasonable alternatives to consider. The intentions behind the Public Transport Corridors and Job Opportunity Focus options were particularly referenced as being of interest and worth exploring further, being likely to play an important role in any preferred spatial strategy.

Assessing reasonableness of identified options

The above sections explain how the identification of issues helped to develop the options, and how internal engagement and strategic alignment helped to identify which options may likely be appropriate as reasonable alternatives, and which may be appropriate to exclude from further assessment. However, it is important to note that 'reasonableness' is defined within the parameters of what the plan is seeking to achieve.⁸⁹ As such, **Appendix 1** reviews each of the long-list options at a high level against the emerging Plan Outcomes. Through this it was possible to arrive at clearly justified reasonable alternatives to consider further through the Sustainability Appraisal.

Agreed core and potential options

As a result of this process, the core options to be taken forward, iterated and assessed as part of Sustainability Appraisal are set out in Table 25, below. Furthermore, additional potential options which are not yet fully definable are set out in Table 26.

⁸⁹ R (Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland Limited) v The Welsh Ministers [2015] EWHC 776 (Admin) at [88], available at <https://www.pacni.gov.uk/publications/ma001b-r-friends-earth-england-wales-and-northern-ireland-limited-v-welsh-ministers>

Table 25 - Core spatial strategy options to be taken forward

Option 1b	Combined Roll Forward by Settlement This seeks to reflect a roll forward of each area's existing plan spatial strategies, applied to the new plan period.
Option 2c	Tiered % Growth This seeks to reflect a proportional increase of dwellings in a settlement depending on its scale.
Option 4b	Climate Resilience This seeks to avoid significant growth in areas at greatest risk of impacts from climate change, including flood risk and coastal change.
Option 4c	Public Transport Corridors This seeks to maximise opportunities of locating growth in places with better access to public transport.
Option 4d	Job Opportunity Focus This seeks to maximise opportunities of locating growth close to higher density clusters of jobs.
Option 6	Real World Delivery This seeks to reflect actual delivery patterns and market behaviour. It is a relatively rurally dispersed strategy.

Table 26 - Additional potential spatial strategy options which are not yet fully definable

Option 5a/b	New Settlements Would involve consideration of the role of one or more new settlements, likely in combination with one of the above core options. Whether new settlements will be needed or not is not yet known. In addition to this, it should be recognised that due to the timescales involved in bringing new settlements forward, it is likely that they would generally only contribute limited delivery within the plan period. If it is considered necessary or preferable to consider new settlements longer-term, then the plan will likely need to establish selection criteria and areas of search at least.
Option 8	Promoted sites Would involve consideration of sites promoted via the Call for Sites process and emerging as 'potentially suitable' or 'potentially unsuitable' within the initial HELAA report.
Option 9	Blended strategy The preferred strategy will almost certainly be a blend of the above options, maximising the benefits and minimising the disbenefits of each.

The Core options can be defined spatially in relation to each settlement within the new Somerset settlement hierarchy. Subsequently, the overall housing requirement for Somerset can be attributed to each settlement by way of a percentage of overall growth. This is set out in **Appendix 2**. Depending on the option, this is attributed either through a blanket approach for all settlements within the same tier/banding, or is bespoke. This is explained in more detail within the sections above. Note, that the distribution to each settlement is based on a number of assumptions and the approaches set out in the above sections. They are not at this point definitive housing targets or allocations for those settlements, and they do not account for elements which are identified in the section above as being relevant to further option iteration.

Furthermore, it should be understood that the settlement requirement is only ever intended to be a guide to the distribution of development. The reality is that any final strategy would need to acknowledge settlement figures as ‘minimums’ (i.e. not maximums) and an indication of the broad level of growth for settlements and distribution across the plan area. Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations apply. If applications were considered to comply with the development plan, the NPPF (in particular note policies S4 and S5 of the consultation Draft NPPF (2025) clearly set out the principle of development within and outside of settlements)⁹⁰ and all relevant material considerations were taken into account, then these settlement figures could be exceeded. In the absence of a five year housing land supply, the ‘tilted balance’ applies and may further distort delivery from the high level settlement figures in any spatial strategy.

The table in Appendix 1 includes two numbers per spatial strategy option per settlement. The first is a figure calculated based purely on the approach explained in the section above. The second takes this figure and accounts for existing allocations and commitments as at 1st April 2025 in order to reflect what additional housing numbers might be required in each settlement for each option. The sites contributing as existing allocations and commitments will be subject to change as allocations are reviewed through local plan development, and new sites gain planning permission and other currently extant permissions lapse. These figures are therefore provided for indicative context and broad comparison of options only at this stage. It should be noted and born in mind that in some options, this figure is negative. This is a product of the above simple calculation only and does not mean that existing allocations should be de-allocated, and existing planning permissions could not be revoked. It highlights the need for further iteration within the options. Final figures and percentages will be recalculated for the preferred spatial strategy based on the housing requirements at the point of publishing.

Appendix 3 then provides maps of each of the 6 core options to provide an indicative visualisation of these options.

⁹⁰ Consultation Draft NPPF policies S4 and S5

Outcome of targeted external engagement on options

Some limited external engagement has begun on spatial strategy options. However, this has been confined to specific targeted engagement where it served a wider purpose. This has included:

- Targeted consultation with statutory bodies (Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England) on the SA Scoping Report and HRA Screening and Scoping Report (NE only) in October-November 2025. Both of these reports included some limited information on the emerging spatial strategy options. No comments were received back on this element of the reports during consultation.
- Targeted engagement meeting with National Highways in January 2026 in relation to transport evidence requirements for the new Local Plan. During this session, emerging spatial strategy options were shared to demonstrate the ongoing work in this regard and to help in issue identification, discuss vision-led approaches, alignment with emerging Local Transport Plan, and work towards understanding potential modelling requirements. No comments were made explicitly about spatial strategy options. However, it was agreed that embedding a vision-led approach from the off would be particularly key.
- Targeted engagement meeting with National Grid Energy Distribution (NGED), Scottish and Southern Energy Networks (SSEN), National Energy System Operator (NESO) in November 2025 to discuss emerging work on the local plan including spatial strategy options and site assessment inputs in the context of the emerging Transitional Regional Energy Strategic Plan (tRESP) and feeding in to NGED/SSEN RIIO ED 3 business planning. No comments were made explicitly about spatial strategy options. However, the need for ongoing engagement and inputs was clearly identified.
- Regular Duty-to-Co-operate meetings take place with Bath & North East Somerset. Some. Emerging spatial strategy options were briefly outlined in meetings in January 2026 in the context of cross-boundary issues and in particular in relation to the Midsomer Norton / Radstock area within Somerset Council boundaries. The relationship with the public transport corridors option was particularly focused on, with a need to explore and capture any emerging opportunities in this regard relating to West of England and B&NES' growth aspirations for the Somer Valley.
- General Duty-to-Co-operate meetings take place regularly with adjoining authorities together. The emerging spatial strategy options and identification of cross-boundary matters of relevance (as summarised in the 'Dutry to Co-operate / cross-boundary issues' section of Chapter 5, above) were shared with this group in a meeting in March 2026. The aforementioned section takes account of discussions and points raised.

Sustainability Appraisal of the options

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a process which runs alongside and informs development of the Local Plan. It is not the decision-making process in itself, but highlights how different reasonable alternatives perform against an agreed Framework of SA Objectives. This highlights likely significant effects in relation to social, economic and environmental factors, and helps to understand implications of decisions on the plan, and what mitigations might be required. However, it only informs the decision making on the plan, and is not a substitute for it.

The SA Scoping Report⁹¹ published alongside the Local Plan Scoping Consultation includes the aforementioned SA Framework of Objectives, which have been informed by and iterated in response to consultation with the statutory consultation bodies (Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England) and other early engagement work. However, the SA Scoping Report does not include any assessment of how the spatial strategy options perform against this Framework.

A separate Spatial Options Assessment Technical Note⁹² has been produced to undertake an initial high level assessment of how each of the spatial strategy options as listed above performs against the SA Framework. This Technical Note will be updated and revised in response to consultation feedback and document further work on iterating options and assessing their performance, and will in time be absorbed into the Draft SA Environmental Report anticipated to be published in support of the Draft Plan consultation on proposed content currently anticipated to be published in 2027.

Habitat Regulations Assessment of the options

Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is another process which runs alongside and informs development of the Local Plan. This particularly considers whether the Plan has potential for likely significant effects upon designated European Sites⁹³. The first stages of HRA are to screen for whether the plan is required to undertake HRA, and for potential likely significant effects, and then scope out the matters of relevance for further consideration during assessment. Again, this process should inform and support the development of the plan.

⁹¹ Somerset Council (2026) Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (Incorporating SEA, HIA and EqIA), available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/evidence-base/>

⁹² Urban Edge Environmental Consulting Ltd on behalf of Somerset Council (2026), Initial Spatial Options Assessment Technical Note, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/evidence-base/>

⁹³ European Sites are defined as being: Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Sites of Community Importance (SCIs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Potential SPAs, Possible / proposed SACs Listed and proposed Ramsar Sites (wetland of international importance), and Sites identified or required as compensation measures for adverse effects on the above. See Figure 22.

The HRA Screening and Scoping Report⁹⁴ published alongside the Local Plan Scoping Consultation was initially undertaken in autumn 2025 and has been updated in 2026 only to account for comments from Natural England as statutory consultees following targeted consultation. As part of this, it provides an initial high level screening assessment and comparison of the six core spatial strategy options as they were defined at the time, in terms of their potential for adverse effects upon European Sites. The report confirms that in all cases there are likely significant effects to be assessed. Since that point, work on the SA, Local Plan Vision and Objectives/Outcomes and spatial strategy have further developed and iterated, including in response to that report. As such, some of the specific details and assumptions used to underpin the assessment have moved on slightly in relation to some options. However, the broad high level identification of potential for likely significant effects still remain valid and useful as a broad comparator between options. Further detail and assessment will be picked up by the HRA process going forward.

7. Next steps - the preferred policy option

The Council is now seeking comment on the emerging spatial strategy options as part of its Local Plan Scoping Consultation. Comments received, alongside further work to iterate options and inputs from SA and HRA processes will help to determine a working preferred spatial strategy.

Once this working preferred spatial strategy has been determined, this will be used to help identify potential site options drawing from those emerging from the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)⁹⁵ and otherwise. The working preferred spatial strategy may then further iterate in response to site assessments and further optioneering, before a proposed spatial strategy is landed on for inclusion in the Draft Local Plan consultation in 2027.

This topic paper will be updated to support the Draft Local Plan consultation in 2027 in due course – further documenting processes and considerations up to that point.

⁹⁴ Lepus Consulting Ltd on behalf of Somerset Council (2025), Habitat Regulations Assessment of the Somerset Local Plan: Screening & Scoping Report, available at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/somerset-local-plan/evidence-base/>

⁹⁵ Somerset Council (2026) Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), available at <https://placemaker.somerset.urbanintelligence.co.uk/p/document/4>

Appendix 1 – Review of long list spatial strategy options against emerging Plan Outcomes

The table below reviews the long-list of identified spatial strategy options at a high level against the emerging Plan Outcomes. The review considers broadly how each option might respond to the different emerging Plan Outcomes, identifying the assumptions involved in this review. The supporting narratives for each Outcome were used to help assess potential alignment. The colouring used is intended to help communicate how the options might comparatively perform against the emerging outcomes:

	Very good
	Good
	Average
	Poor
	Very poor

Alongside this, a high level view was taken over whether an option was potentially realistically deliverable, spatially definable at this stage, and whether it takes sufficient account of constraints. The final column then identifies whether an option was therefore considered appropriate as a core reasonable alternative, potentially as a reasonable alternative where not currently spatially definable, or whether it was justified to be excluded from further assessment. Those considered appropriate as core or potential reasonable alternatives are to be taken forward for further consideration through the Sustainability Appraisal.

It should be noted that this review is high level and based on assumptions about how different options may broadly differ. It is not a detailed assessment of likely significant effects, but designed to help demonstrate the justification of reasonable alternatives for further assessment.

Appendix 2 – Detailed indicative breakdown of spatial strategy options by settlement

Notes on option scenarios

The table below sets out how housing growth could potentially be distributed across each settlement within the settlement hierarchy in each of the six core spatial strategy options (options 1b, 2c, 4b, 4c, 4d and 6). The above working draft spatial strategy topic paper sets out how these options were arrived at and the approach taken in calculating the potential distribution per settlement, and should be read in conjunction with the table below. As explained in the report above, it has not at this time been possible to spatially define options 5a/b, 8 or 9, as such these are not broken down in the table.

Each option contains three columns:

1. **Potential housing requirement** – The indicative minimum number of houses that the spatial strategy option is calculated to attribute to a given settlement.
2. **Potential % of overall growth** – The percentage of the overall growth for Somerset across the 2025-2045 plan period represented by the potential housing requirement. The overall housing target for Somerset used in calculating this percentage has generally been 75,380⁹⁶. However, two of the options (Options 2a⁹⁷ and 6⁹⁸) show alternative figures simply as a result of how the settlement breakdowns have been calculated.
3. **Potential remainder to find** – A figure calculated by simply by subtracting projected completions (from allocations and commitments) from the potential housing requirement (point 1, above) for a settlement in a given option. It should be noted and born in mind that in some options, this figure is negative. This is a product of the above simple calculation only and does not mean that existing allocations should be de-allocated, and existing planning permissions could not be revoked. It highlights the need for further iteration within the options.

⁹⁶ Note - This 75,380 figure is derived from the standard method 3,769 per annum figure published in December 2024 and does not take into account new affordability data published in March 2025 which updated this figure to 3,746 per annum (and would mean a target of 74,920 over the plan period). These figures are provided for indicative context and broad comparison of options only at this stage. Final figures and percentages will be recalculated for the preferred spatial strategy based on the housing requirements at the point of publishing.

⁹⁷ The total for Option 2a adds up to more than 75,380 because of the contributions being calculated over existing dwelling numbers and to ensure percentage uplifts for settlements were provided as integers.

⁹⁸ The total for Option 6 does not add up to 75,380 because approximately 6.18% of completions over the 10 year period were in areas outside of the listed settlements. In this scenario, it should be assumed that the remaining 6.18% (4,659 homes) would be delivered outside of the named settlements, within the wider open countryside across Somerset.

The settlement figures within the table are not at this point definitive housing targets or proposed allocations for those settlements, and they do not account for elements which are identified in the paper above as being relevant to further option iteration.

The indicative settlement requirement is only ever intended to be a guide to the distribution of development. The reality is that any final strategy would need to acknowledge settlement figures as ‘minimums’ (i.e. not maximums) and an indication of the broad level of growth for settlements and distribution across the plan area. Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations apply. If applications were considered to comply with the development plan, the NPPF (in particular note policies S4 and S5 of the consultation Draft NPPF (2025) clearly set out the principle of development within and outside of settlements)⁹⁹ and all relevant material considerations were taken into account, then these settlement figures could be exceeded. In the absence of a five year housing land supply, the ‘tilted balance’ applies and may further distort delivery from the high level settlement figures in any spatial strategy.

Existing allocations and commitments are provided, with a ‘potential remainder to find’ for context and information only. All existing plan allocations will be reviewed, as to whether they are appropriate to continue as allocations in the new Plan. In addition to this, the sites contributing as ‘commitments’ is as at 1st April 2025 and will be subject to change as new sites gain planning permission and other currently extant permissions lapse. These figures are therefore provided for indicative context and broad comparison of options only at this stage.

Final figures and percentages will be recalculated for the preferred spatial strategy based on the housing requirements at the point of publishing.

⁹⁹ Consultation Draft NPPF policies S4 and S5

Settlement	New settlement tier (from emerging Role & Function Study)	Existing allocations and commitments at 01/04/2025	Option 1b – Combined Roll-Forward by settlement			Option 2c – Tiered % Growth			Option 4b – Climate Resilience			Option 4c – Public Transport Corridors			Option 4d – Job Opportunity Focus			Option 6 – Real-World Delivery		
			Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find
Bridgwater	Tier 1	4926	11308	15.0%	6382	10087	13.3%	5161	443	0.6%	-4483	11307	15.0%	6381	2261	3.0%	-2665	8429	11.2%	3503
Taunton	Tier 1	8019	18108	24.0%	10089	15291	20.2%	7272	18091	24.0%	10072	11307	15.0%	3288	2261	3.0%	-5758	12985	17.2%	4966
Yeovil	Tier 1	1882	10365	13.8%	8483	10227	13.5%	8345	18091	24.0%	16209	11307	15.0%	9425	2261	3.0%	379	5659	7.5%	3777
Chard	Tier 2	346	2580	3.4%	2234	2307	3.0%	1961	2429	3.2%	2083	0	0.0%	-346	10	0.0%	-336	2070	2.7%	1724
Cheddar	Tier 2	215	922	1.2%	707	991	1.3%	776	2429	3.2%	2214	38	0.1%	-177	293	0.4%	78	1073	1.4%	858
Crewkerne	Tier 2	410	1339	1.8%	929	1167	1.5%	757	2429	3.2%	2019	422	0.6%	12	10	0.0%	-400	352	0.5%	-58
Frome	Tier 2	820	3229	4.3%	2409	4596	6.1%	3776	2429	3.2%	1609	11307	15.0%	10487	942	1.3%	122	3201	4.2%	2381
Glastonbury	Tier 2	305	1485	2.0%	1180	1664	2.2%	1359	443	0.6%	138	422	0.6%	117	293	0.4%	-12	1150	1.5%	845
Highbridge & Burnham (inc. Burnham Marine)	Tier 2	1098	2828	3.8%	1730	3692	4.9%	2594	98	0.1%	-1000	6282	8.3%	5184	293	0.4%	-805	1889	2.5%	791
Minehead & Alcombe	Tier 2	1304	1444	1.9%	140	2135	2.8%	831	443	0.6%	-861	422	0.6%	-882	10	0.0%	-1294	749	1.0%	-555
Shepton Mallet	Tier 2	815	1811	2.4%	996	1713	2.3%	898	2429	3.2%	1614	422	0.6%	-393	293	0.4%	-522	688	0.9%	-127
Street	Tier 2	776	1978	2.6%	1202	1971	2.6%	1195	2429	3.2%	1653	422	0.6%	-354	293	0.4%	-483	978	1.3%	202
Wellington	Tier 2	1681	3482	4.6%	1801	2745	3.6%	1064	2429	3.2%	748	422	0.6%	-1259	293	0.4%	-1388	4412	5.9%	2731
Wells	Tier 2	599	2085	2.8%	1486	2125	2.8%	1526	2429	3.2%	1830	422	0.6%	-177	293	0.4%	-306	3351	4.4%	2752
Wincanton (inc. Bayford)	Tier 2	165	979	1.3%	814	1086	1.4%	921	2429	3.2%	2264	38	0.1%	-127	10	0.0%	-155	1131	1.5%	966
Ansford & Castle Cary	Tier 3a	548	521	0.7%	-27	427	0.6%	-121	443	0.6%	-105	422	0.6%	-126	10	0.0%	-538	972	1.3%	424
Bruton & Pitcombe	Tier 3a	28	283	0.4%	255	303	0.4%	275	443	0.6%	415	422	0.6%	394	10	0.0%	-18	214	0.3%	186
Ilminster	Tier 3a	260	691	0.9%	431	699	0.9%	439	98	0.1%	-162	38	0.1%	-222	10	0.0%	-250	660	0.9%	400
Langport & Huish Episcopi	Tier 3a	120	521	0.7%	401	436	0.6%	316	98	0.1%	-22	38	0.1%	-82	0	0.0%	-120	795	1.1%	675
North Petherton	Tier 3a	175	397	0.5%	222	373	0.5%	198	443	0.6%	268	6282	8.3%	6107	2261	3.0%	2086	853	1.1%	678
Somerton	Tier 3a	80	521	0.7%	441	655	0.9%	575	443	0.6%	363	38	0.1%	-42	10	0.0%	-70	1657	2.2%	1577
Abbas & Templecombe	Tier 3b	243	0	0.0%	-243	234	0.3%	-10	443	0.6%	200	6282	8.3%	6039	10	0.0%	-233	251	0.3%	8
Axbridge	Tier 3b	44	98	0.1%	54	231	0.3%	187	443	0.6%	399	0	0.0%	-44	293	0.4%	249	79	0.1%	35
Berrow & Brea	Tier 3b	0	155	0.2%	155	303	0.4%	303	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	293	0.4%	293	202	0.3%	202

Settlement	New settlement tier (from emerging Role & Function Study)	Existing allocations and commitments at 01/04/2025	Option 1b – Combined Roll-Forward by settlement			Option 2c – Tiered % Growth			Option 4b – Climate Resilience			Option 4c – Public Transport Corridors			Option 4d – Job Opportunity Focus			Option 6 – Real-World Delivery		
			Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find
Bishop's Lydeard	Tier 3b	1	209	0.3%	208	243	0.3%	242	443	0.6%	442	422	0.6%	421	10	0.0%	9	639	0.8%	638
Cannington	Tier 3b	160	209	0.3%	49	232	0.3%	72	98	0.1%	-62	0	0.0%	-160	2261	3.0%	2101	287	0.4%	127
Chilcompton	Tier 3b	19	98	0.1%	79	240	0.3%	221	443	0.6%	424	38	0.1%	19	942	1.3%	923	330	0.4%	311
Cotford St Luke	Tier 3b	127	84	0.1%	-43	240	0.3%	113	98	0.1%	-29	38	0.1%	-89	293	0.4%	166	220	0.3%	93
Creech St Michael	Tier 3b	113	194	0.3%	81	247	0.3%	134	98	0.1%	-15	0	0.0%	-113	2261	3.0%	2148	480	0.6%	367
Evercreech	Tier 3b	2	98	0.1%	96	258	0.3%	256	443	0.6%	441	0	0.0%	-2	10	0.0%	8	404	0.5%	402
Ilchester	Tier 3b	16	196	0.3%	180	232	0.3%	216	98	0.1%	82	38	0.1%	22	10	0.0%	-6	449	0.6%	433
Martock & Bower Hinton	Tier 3b	71	320	0.4%	249	546	0.7%	475	443	0.6%	372	0	0.0%	-71	10	0.0%	-61	608	0.8%	537
Milborne Port	Tier 3b	78	389	0.5%	311	375	0.5%	297	443	0.6%	365	0	0.0%	-78	293	0.4%	215	388	0.5%	310
Nether Stowey	Tier 3b	62	70	0.1%	8	231	0.3%	169	443	0.6%	381	0	0.0%	-62	10	0.0%	-52	284	0.4%	222
South Petherton	Tier 3b	29	319	0.4%	290	382	0.5%	353	443	0.6%	414	38	0.1%	9	10	0.0%	-19	474	0.6%	445
Watchet	Tier 3b	554	804	1.1%	250	509	0.7%	-45	98	0.1%	-456	422	0.6%	-132	0	0.0%	-554	260	0.3%	-294
Williton	Tier 3b	925	965	1.3%	40	302	0.4%	-623	98	0.1%	-827	422	0.6%	-503	0	0.0%	-925	312	0.4%	-613
Wiveliscombe	Tier 3b	220	279	0.4%	59	318	0.4%	98	443	0.6%	223	0	0.0%	-220	0	0.0%	-220	633	0.8%	413
Ash	Tier 4	4	0	0.0%	-4	42	0.1%	38	98	0.1%	94	0	0.0%	-4	10	0.0%	6	21	0.0%	17
Ashcott	Tier 4	12	77	0.1%	65	63	0.1%	51	98	0.1%	86	38	0.1%	26	10	0.0%	-2	76	0.1%	64
Baltonsborough	Tier 4	30	63	0.1%	33	71	0.1%	41	98	0.1%	68	0	0.0%	-30	10	0.0%	-20	235	0.3%	205
Beckington	Tier 4	39	77	0.1%	38	71	0.1%	32	98	0.1%	59	422	0.6%	383	293	0.4%	254	294	0.4%	255
Blackford	Tier 4	10	56	0.1%	46	44	0.1%	34	98	0.1%	88	0	0.0%	-10	10	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	-10
Brent Knoll	Tier 4	0	77	0.1%	77	80	0.1%	80	32	0.0%	32	38	0.1%	38	293	0.4%	293	135	0.2%	135
Burton (inc. North Coker & East Coker)	Tier 4	8	0	0.0%	-8	83	0.1%	75	98	0.1%	90	38	0.1%	30	2261	3.0%	2253	116	0.2%	108
Catcott & Edington	Tier 4	0	132	0.2%	132	60	0.1%	60	98	0.1%	98	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	37	0.0%	37
Charlton Horethorne	Tier 4	2	0	0.0%	-2	44	0.1%	42	98	0.1%	96	0	0.0%	-2	10	0.0%	8	31	0.0%	29
Chewton Mendip	Tier 4	0	21	0.0%	21	35	0.0%	35	98	0.1%	98	38	0.1%	38	10	0.0%	10	6	0.0%	6
Chilthorne Domer	Tier 4	31	0	0.0%	-31	35	0.0%	4	98	0.1%	67	0	0.0%	-31	2261	3.0%	2230	12	0.0%	-19

Settlement	New settlement tier (from emerging Role & Function Study)	Existing allocations and commitments at 01//04/2025	Option 1b – Combined Roll-Forward by settlement			Option 2c – Tiered % Growth			Option 4b – Climate Resilience			Option 4c – Public Transport Corridors			Option 4d – Job Opportunity Focus			Option 6 – Real-World Delivery		
			Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find
Coleford	Tier 4	166	185	0.2%	19	149	0.2%	-17	98	0.1%	-68	0	0.0%	-166	293	0.4%	127	113	0.2%	-53
Combe St Nicholas (inc. Wadeford)	Tier 4	25	0	0.0%	-25	103	0.1%	78	98	0.1%	73	0	0.0%	-25	10	0.0%	-15	73	0.1%	48
Combwich	Tier 4	0	0	0.0%	0	46	0.1%	46	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	10	0.0%	10	9	0.0%	9
Coxley & Upper Coxley & Coxley Wick	Tier 4	25	56	0.1%	31	73	0.1%	48	98	0.1%	73	422	0.6%	397	293	0.4%	268	211	0.3%	186
Croscombe	Tier 4	6	49	0.1%	43	42	0.1%	36	98	0.1%	92	0	0.0%	-6	942	1.3%	936	28	0.0%	22
Crowcombe	Tier 4	42	13	0.0%	-29	37	0.0%	-5	98	0.1%	56	0	0.0%	-42	10	0.0%	-32	18	0.0%	-24
Curry Mallet	Tier 4	2	0	0.0%	-2	23	0.0%	21	98	0.1%	96	0	0.0%	-2	0	0.0%	-2	24	0.0%	22
Curry Rivel	Tier 4	21	0	0.0%	-21	147	0.2%	126	98	0.1%	77	0	0.0%	-21	0	0.0%	-21	306	0.4%	285
Ditcheat	Tier 4	50	35	0.0%	-15	26	0.0%	-24	98	0.1%	48	422	0.6%	372	10	0.0%	-40	24	0.0%	-26
Draycott	Tier 4	37	91	0.1%	54	69	0.1%	32	98	0.1%	61	0	0.0%	-37	10	0.0%	-27	9	0.0%	-28
East Brent	Tier 4	40	77	0.1%	37	42	0.1%	2	32	0.0%	-8	0	0.0%	-40	942	1.3%	902	89	0.1%	49
Hambridge	Tier 4	3	0	0.0%	-3	37	0.0%	34	98	0.1%	95	0	0.0%	-3	0	0.0%	-3	52	0.1%	49
Haselbury Plucknett	Tier 4	10	0	0.0%	-10	51	0.1%	41	98	0.1%	88	422	0.6%	412	10	0.0%	0	21	0.0%	11
Hatch Beauchamp	Tier 4	9	0	0.0%	-9	41	0.1%	32	98	0.1%	89	0	0.0%	-9	0	0.0%	-9	9	0.0%	0
Henstridge	Tier 4	139	0	0.0%	-139	132	0.2%	-7	98	0.1%	-41	422	0.6%	283	10	0.0%	-129	104	0.1%	-35
High Ham	Tier 4	14	0	0.0%	-14	62	0.1%	48	98	0.1%	84	0	0.0%	-14	10	0.0%	-4	86	0.1%	72
Hillcommon (inc. Oake)	Tier 4	18	0	0.0%	-18	53	0.1%	35	98	0.1%	80	0	0.0%	-18	293	0.4%	275	21	0.0%	3
Hinton St George	Tier 4	2	0	0.0%	-2	42	0.1%	40	98	0.1%	96	0	0.0%	-2	10	0.0%	8	40	0.1%	38
Horton (and Broadway)	Tier 4	73	0	0.0%	-73	128	0.2%	55	98	0.1%	25	0	0.0%	-73	10	0.0%	-63	199	0.3%	126
Huntspill (inc. West Huntspill)	Tier 4	45	77	0.1%	32	77	0.1%	32	32	0.0%	-13	422	0.6%	377	2261	3.0%	2216	64	0.1%	19
Ilton	Tier 4	2	0	0.0%	-2	40	0.1%	38	98	0.1%	96	0	0.0%	-2	10	0.0%	8	193	0.3%	191
Keinton Mandeville	Tier 4	30	0	0.0%	-30	72	0.1%	42	98	0.1%	68	0	0.0%	-30	10	0.0%	-20	290	0.4%	260
Kilmersdon	Tier 4	2	21	0.0%	19	39	0.1%	37	98	0.1%	96	0	0.0%	-2	942	1.3%	940	6	0.0%	4
Kingston St Mary	Tier 4	10	0	0.0%	-10	29	0.0%	19	98	0.1%	88	0	0.0%	-10	2261	3.0%	2251	37	0.0%	27

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Langford Budville	Tier 4	0	0	0.0%	0	36	0.0%	36	98	0.1%	98	0	0.0%	0	293	0.4%	293	34	0.0%	34
Leigh-On-Mendip	Tier 4	2	0	0.0%	-2	39	0.1%	37	98	0.1%	96	0	0.0%	-2	10	0.0%	8	70	0.1%	68
Long Sutton	Tier 4	6	0	0.0%	-6	60	0.1%	54	98	0.1%	92	0	0.0%	-6	10	0.0%	4	67	0.1%	61
Lympham	Tier 4	0	77	0.1%	77	36	0.0%	36	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	942	1.3%	942	70	0.1%	70
Mark (and Mark Causeway)	Tier 4	0	77	0.1%	77	92	0.1%	92	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	293	0.4%	293	70	0.1%	70
Mells	Tier 4	5	14	0.0%	9	46	0.1%	41	98	0.1%	93	0	0.0%	-5	293	0.4%	288	6	0.0%	1
Merriot	Tier 4	120	0	0.0%	-120	144	0.2%	24	98	0.1%	-22	0	0.0%	-120	10	0.0%	-110	248	0.3%	128
Middlezoy	Tier 4	26	77	0.1%	51	50	0.1%	24	32	0.0%	6	0	0.0%	-26	942	1.3%	916	55	0.1%	29
Milverton	Tier 4	24	28	0.0%	4	79	0.1%	55	98	0.1%	74	0	0.0%	-24	10	0.0%	-14	12	0.0%	-12
Montacute (inc. East Stoke)	Tier 4	0	0	0.0%	0	63	0.1%	63	98	0.1%	98	0	0.0%	0	942	1.3%	942	61	0.1%	61
North Cadbury	Tier 4	7	0	0.0%	-7	47	0.1%	40	98	0.1%	91	0	0.0%	-7	10	0.0%	3	70	0.1%	63
North Curry	Tier 4	0	70	0.1%	70	76	0.1%	76	98	0.1%	98	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	220	0.3%	220
North Newton	Tier 4	0	56	0.1%	56	41	0.1%	41	98	0.1%	98	0	0.0%	0	942	1.3%	942	40	0.1%	40
Norton St Philip	Tier 4	10	63	0.1%	53	71	0.1%	61	98	0.1%	88	38	0.1%	28	10	0.0%	0	214	0.3%	204
Norton Sub Hamdon	Tier 4	0	0	0.0%	0	51	0.1%	51	98	0.1%	98	0	0.0%	0	10	0.0%	10	122	0.2%	122
Nunney & Nunney Catch	Tier 4	3	77	0.1%	74	59	0.1%	56	98	0.1%	95	0	0.0%	-3	293	0.4%	290	263	0.3%	260
Oakhill	Tier 4	26	56	0.1%	30	48	0.1%	22	98	0.1%	72	0	0.0%	-26	293	0.4%	267	92	0.1%	66
Puriton	Tier 4	360	139	0.2%	-221	117	0.2%	-243	98	0.1%	-262	0	0.0%	-360	2261	3.0%	1901	376	0.5%	16
Queen Camel	Tier 4	9	0	0.0%	-9	44	0.1%	35	98	0.1%	89	0	0.0%	-9	10	0.0%	1	70	0.1%	61
Rode	Tier 4	10	91	0.1%	81	77	0.1%	67	98	0.1%	88	0	0.0%	-10	942	1.3%	932	165	0.2%	155
Ruishton (inc. Henlade)	Tier 4	159	0	0.0%	-159	106	0.1%	-53	32	0.0%	-127	0	0.0%	-159	2261	3.0%	2102	110	0.1%	-49
Shepton Beauchamp	Tier 4	0	0	0.0%	0	55	0.1%	55	98	0.1%	98	0	0.0%	0	10	0.0%	10	89	0.1%	89
Shipham	Tier 4	0	77	0.1%	77	74	0.1%	74	98	0.1%	98	0	0.0%	0	942	1.3%	942	18	0.0%	18
Spaxton	Tier 4	0	77	0.1%	77	45	0.1%	45	98	0.1%	98	0	0.0%	0	10	0.0%	10	15	0.0%	15
Stogumber	Tier 4	0	22	0.0%	22	30	0.0%	30	98	0.1%	98	0	0.0%	0	10	0.0%	10	43	0.1%	43

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Stogursey	Tier 4	53	54	0.1%	1	58	0.1%	5	98	0.1%	45	0	0.0%	-53	10	0.0%	-43	107	0.1%	54
Stoke St Gregory (inc. Meare Green)	Tier 4	0	0	0.0%	0	71	0.1%	71	98	0.1%	98	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	159	0.2%	159
Stoke St Michael	Tier 4	50	63	0.1%	13	48	0.1%	-2	98	0.1%	48	0	0.0%	-50	293	0.4%	243	31	0.0%	-19
Stoke sub Hamdon	Tier 4	1	71	0.1%	70	119	0.2%	118	98	0.1%	97	0	0.0%	-1	293	0.4%	292	180	0.2%	179
Tatworth (inc. South Chard & Chard Junction)	Tier 4	7	0	0.0%	-7	182	0.2%	175	98	0.1%	91	0	0.0%	-7	10	0.0%	3	156	0.2%	149
Tintinhull	Tier 4	29	0	0.0%	-29	65	0.1%	36	98	0.1%	69	0	0.0%	-29	942	1.3%	913	31	0.0%	2
Walton	Tier 4	54	56	0.1%	2	54	0.1%	0	98	0.1%	44	38	0.1%	-16	293	0.4%	239	113	0.2%	59
Washford	Tier 4	35	42	0.1%	7	44	0.1%	9	98	0.1%	63	0	0.0%	-35	0	0.0%	-35	34	0.0%	-1
Weare and Lower Weare	Tier 4	0	56	0.1%	56	43	0.1%	43	98	0.1%	98	0	0.0%	0	293	0.4%	293	28	0.0%	28
Wedmore	Tier 4	26	70	0.1%	44	103	0.1%	77	98	0.1%	72	0	0.0%	-26	10	0.0%	-16	511	0.7%	485
West Chinnock	Tier 4	1	0	0.0%	-1	41	0.1%	40	98	0.1%	97	0	0.0%	-1	10	0.0%	9	12	0.0%	11
West Coker	Tier 4	13	0	0.0%	-13	93	0.1%	80	98	0.1%	85	0	0.0%	-13	2261	3.0%	2248	315	0.4%	302
Westbury Sub Mendip	Tier 4	62	70	0.1%	8	55	0.1%	-7	98	0.1%	36	0	0.0%	-62	293	0.4%	231	15	0.0%	-47
Westonzoyland	Tier 4	0	77	0.1%	77	122	0.2%	122	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	942	1.3%	942	180	0.2%	180
Winsham	Tier 4	7	0	0.0%	-7	55	0.1%	48	98	0.1%	91	0	0.0%	-7	0	0.0%	-7	70	0.1%	63
Wookey	Tier 4	16	56	0.1%	40	56	0.1%	40	98	0.1%	82	0	0.0%	-16	293	0.4%	277	83	0.1%	67
Woolavington	Tier 4	14	209	0.3%	195	160	0.2%	146	98	0.1%	84	0	0.0%	-14	942	1.3%	928	190	0.3%	176
Barrington	Countryside	9	0	0.0%	-9	11	0.0%	2	32	0.0%	23	0	0.0%	-9	10	0.0%	1	12	0.0%	3
Barton St David	Countryside	7	0	0.0%	-7	14	0.0%	7	32	0.0%	25	0	0.0%	-7	0	0.0%	-7	31	0.0%	24
Barwick (inc. Stoford)	Countryside	5	0	0.0%	-5	29	0.0%	24	32	0.0%	27	422	0.6%	417	2261	3.0%	2256	18	0.0%	13
Batcombe	Countryside	0	0	0.0%	0	10	0.0%	10	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	10	0.0%	10	0	0.0%	0
Bawdrip	Countryside	10	56	0.1%	46	10	0.0%	0	32	0.0%	22	0	0.0%	-10	2261	3.0%	2251	6	0.0%	-4
Bicknoller	Countryside	0	17	0.0%	17	10	0.0%	10	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	10	0.0%	10	18	0.0%	18
Binegar & Gurney Slade	Countryside	16	56	0.1%	40	14	0.0%	-2	32	0.0%	16	0	0.0%	-16	293	0.4%	277	21	0.0%	5

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Blagdon Hill	Countryside	0	0	0.0%	0	12	0.0%	12	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	293	0.4%	293	58	0.1%	58
Blue Anchor	Countryside	0	0	0.0%	0	6	0.0%	6	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	10	0.0%	10	6	0.0%	6
Bradford-on-Tone	Countryside	0	0	0.0%	0	15	0.0%	15	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	2261	3.0%	2261	18	0.0%	18
Brushford	Countryside	2	0	0.0%	-2	14	0.0%	12	32	0.0%	30	0	0.0%	-2	0	0.0%	-2	79	0.1%	77
Buckland Dinham	Countryside	0	0	0.0%	0	9	0.0%	9	32	0.0%	32	38	0.1%	38	942	1.3%	942	0	0.0%	0
Butleigh	Countryside	77	63	0.1%	-14	18	0.0%	-59	32	0.0%	-45	0	0.0%	-77	10	0.0%	-67	6	0.0%	-71
Carhampton	Countryside	11	45	0.1%	34	20	0.0%	9	32	0.0%	21	0	0.0%	-11	10	0.0%	-1	159	0.2%	148
Chedzoy	Countryside	0	56	0.1%	56	9	0.0%	9	32	0.0%	32	422	0.6%	422	2261	3.0%	2261	18	0.0%	18
Chilton Polden	Countryside	0	195	0.3%	195	16	0.0%	16	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	942	1.3%	942	89	0.1%	89
Churchinford	Countryside	0	28	0.0%	28	10	0.0%	10	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	101	0.1%	101
Compton Dundon and Dundon	Countryside	40	0	0.0%	-40	17	0.0%	-23	32	0.0%	-8	0	0.0%	-40	293	0.4%	253	138	0.2%	98
Cossington	Countryside	0	56	0.1%	56	16	0.0%	16	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	942	1.3%	942	31	0.0%	31
Cross	Countryside	0	0	0.0%	0	7	0.0%	7	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	293	0.4%	293	24	0.0%	24
Drayton	Countryside	8	0	0.0%	-8	9	0.0%	1	32	0.0%	24	0	0.0%	-8	0	0.0%	-8	43	0.1%	35
East Chinnock	Countryside	2	0	0.0%	-2	12	0.0%	10	32	0.0%	30	0	0.0%	-2	942	1.3%	940	49	0.1%	47
East Huntspill	Countryside	0	77	0.1%	77	19	0.0%	19	32	0.0%	32	422	0.6%	422	293	0.4%	293	95	0.1%	95
Easton	Countryside	2	0	0.0%	-2	15	0.0%	13	32	0.0%	30	0	0.0%	-2	293	0.4%	291	18	0.0%	16
Edithmead	Countryside	0	0	0.0%	0	13	0.0%	13	32	0.0%	32	422	0.6%	422	293	0.4%	293	40	0.1%	40
Faulkland	Countryside	7	28	0.0%	21	9	0.0%	2	32	0.0%	25	0	0.0%	-7	10	0.0%	3	98	0.1%	91
Fitzhead	Countryside	0	0	0.0%	0	6	0.0%	6	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	10	0.0%	10	6	0.0%	6
Fivehead	Countryside	22	0	0.0%	-22	15	0.0%	-7	32	0.0%	10	0	0.0%	-22	0	0.0%	-22	46	0.1%	24
Galhampton	Countryside	1	0	0.0%	-1	7	0.0%	6	32	0.0%	31	38	0.1%	37	10	0.0%	9	0	0.0%	-1
Halse	Countryside	0	0	0.0%	0	7	0.0%	7	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	31	0.0%	31
Hardington Moor/Hardington Mandeville	Countryside	4	0	0.0%	-4	13	0.0%	9	32	0.0%	28	0	0.0%	-4	942	1.3%	938	46	0.1%	42

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Holcombe	Countryside	5	56	0.1%	51	22	0.0%	17	32	0.0%	27	0	0.0%	-5	293	0.4%	288	28	0.0%	23
Horsington	Countryside	15	0	0.0%	-15	7	0.0%	-8	32	0.0%	17	422	0.6%	407	10	0.0%	-5	31	0.0%	16
Kilve	Countryside	0	15	0.0%	15	10	0.0%	10	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	10	0.0%	10	6	0.0%	6
Kingsbury Episcopi	Countryside	15	0	0.0%	-15	15	0.0%	0	32	0.0%	17	0	0.0%	-15	10	0.0%	-5	131	0.2%	116
Kingsdon	Countryside	1	0	0.0%	-1	9	0.0%	8	32	0.0%	31	0	0.0%	-1	10	0.0%	9	58	0.1%	57
Lydeard St Lawrence	Countryside	0	0	0.0%	0	11	0.0%	11	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	34	0.0%	34
Marston Magna Meare (inc. Oxenpill)	Countryside	19	0	0.0%	-19	11	0.0%	-8	32	0.0%	13	0	0.0%	-19	10	0.0%	-9	9	0.0%	-10
Misterton	Countryside	8	56	0.1%	48	21	0.0%	13	32	0.0%	24	0	0.0%	-8	10	0.0%	2	135	0.2%	127
North Perrott	Countryside	9	0	0.0%	-9	38	0.0%	29	32	0.0%	23	422	0.6%	413	10	0.0%	1	254	0.3%	245
Odcombe	Countryside	3	0	0.0%	-3	6	0.0%	3	32	0.0%	29	422	0.6%	419	10	0.0%	7	12	0.0%	9
Othery	Countryside	2	0	0.0%	-2	18	0.0%	16	32	0.0%	30	0	0.0%	-2	2261	3.0%	2259	9	0.0%	7
Othery	Countryside	0	56	0.1%	56	14	0.0%	14	32	0.0%	32	38	0.1%	38	0	0.0%	0	61	0.1%	61
Pawlett	Countryside	41	77	0.1%	36	22	0.0%	-19	32	0.0%	-9	0	0.0%	-41	2261	3.0%	2220	119	0.2%	78
Pilton	Countryside	6	0	0.0%	-6	16	0.0%	10	32	0.0%	26	0	0.0%	-6	293	0.4%	287	122	0.2%	116
Priddy	Countryside	3	0	0.0%	-3	7	0.0%	4	32	0.0%	29	0	0.0%	-3	10	0.0%	7	18	0.0%	15
Rooks Bridge	Countryside	0	0	0.0%	0	15	0.0%	15	32	0.0%	32	38	0.1%	38	10	0.0%	10	0	0.0%	0
Seavington St Michael	Countryside	5	0	0.0%	-5	13	0.0%	8	32	0.0%	27	0	0.0%	-5	10	0.0%	5	61	0.1%	56
Shapwick	Countryside	0	56	0.1%	56	10	0.0%	10	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	12	0.0%	12
Sparkford	Countryside	3	0	0.0%	-3	13	0.0%	10	32	0.0%	29	0	0.0%	-3	0	0.0%	-3	443	0.6%	440
Stoke St Mary	Countryside	0	0	0.0%	0	11	0.0%	11	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	2261	3.0%	2261	21	0.0%	21
Stratton-On-The-Fosse	Countryside	0	0	0.0%	0	14	0.0%	14	32	0.0%	32	38	0.1%	38	942	1.3%	942	31	0.0%	31
The Charltons - Charlton Adam & Charlton Mackrell	Countryside	44	0	0.0%	-44	24	0.0%	-20	32	0.0%	-12	0	0.0%	-44	10	0.0%	-34	52	0.1%	8
The Lydfords	Countryside	2	35	0.0%	33	11	0.0%	9	32	0.0%	30	0	0.0%	-2	10	0.0%	8	12	0.0%	10
Theale	Countryside	0	0	0.0%	0	7	0.0%	7	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	10	0.0%	10	83	0.1%	83

Settlement	New settlement tier (from emerging Role & Function Study)	Existing allocations and commitments at 01/04/2025	Option 1b – Combined Roll-Forward by settlement			Option 2c – Tiered % Growth			Option 4b – Climate Resilience			Option 4c – Public Transport Corridors			Option 4d – Job Opportunity Focus			Option 6 – Real-World Delivery		
			Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find	Potential housing requirement	Potential % of overall growth	Potential remainder to find
Wanstrow	Countryside	5	0	0.0%	-5	11	0.0%	6	32	0.0%	27	0	0.0%	-5	10	0.0%	5	15	0.0%	10
West Camel	Countryside	48	0	0.0%	-48	12	0.0%	-36	32	0.0%	-16	0	0.0%	-48	10	0.0%	-38	28	0.0%	-20
West Pennard	Countryside	82	35	0.0%	-47	15	0.0%	-67	32	0.0%	-50	0	0.0%	-82	10	0.0%	-72	31	0.0%	-51
West Quantoxhead	Countryside	0	17	0.0%	17	9	0.0%	9	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	10	0.0%	10	208	0.3%	208
Witham Friary	Countryside	0	0	0.0%	0	8	0.0%	8	32	0.0%	32	0	0.0%	0	10	0.0%	10	3	0.0%	3
Wookey Hole	Countryside	2	21	0.0%	19	9	0.0%	7	32	0.0%	30	0	0.0%	-2	10	0.0%	8	12	0.0%	10
Total		29819	75380	100.0%	45561	75752 ¹⁰⁰	100.0%	45933	75380	100.0%	45561	75380	100.0%	45561	75380	100.0%	45561	70721 ¹⁰¹	100.0%	40902

¹⁰⁰ Due to the process by which Option 2c was developed (% growth in dwelling stock) this total here is different to the 75,380 figure used elsewhere. See 'Settlement revival' section of chapter 5 in the main report for further explanation.

¹⁰¹ Due to the process by which Option 6 was developed (analysis of past delivery) this total here is different to the 75,380 figure used elsewhere. The remainder would effectively be assumed as delivered outside the listed settlements within the open countryside. See 'Past Delivery' section of chapter 5 in the main report for further explanation.

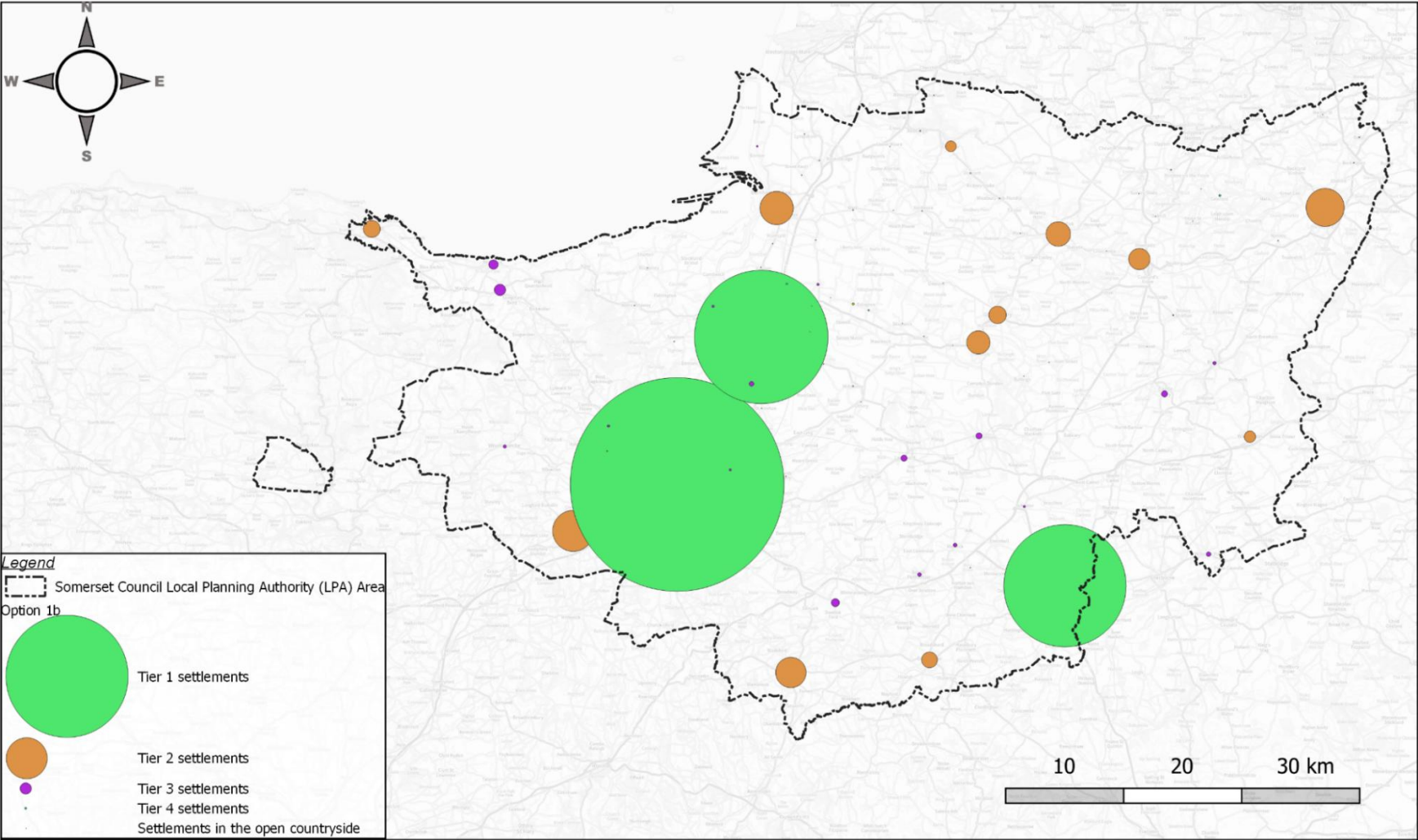
Appendix 3 – Indicative visualisations of each core spatial strategy option

Notes on indicative visualisations

The following maps provide indicative visualisations of each of the six core spatial strategy options. They display a coloured dot for each settlement within the settlement hierarchy, coloured according to its tier (or in the case of options 4c and 4d their relevant banding – see relevant sections of chapter 5, above for details of why these are defined differently). Each dot is sized according to the level of growth that would be accommodated in the relevant spatial strategy option, as per the ‘potential housing requirement’ column for the option in the table found in Appendix 1. The dots are indicative of this relative share of the growth, not intended as a definitive boundary or to suggest all land falling within them is appropriate for development.

Option 1b – Combined Roll Forward by Settlement

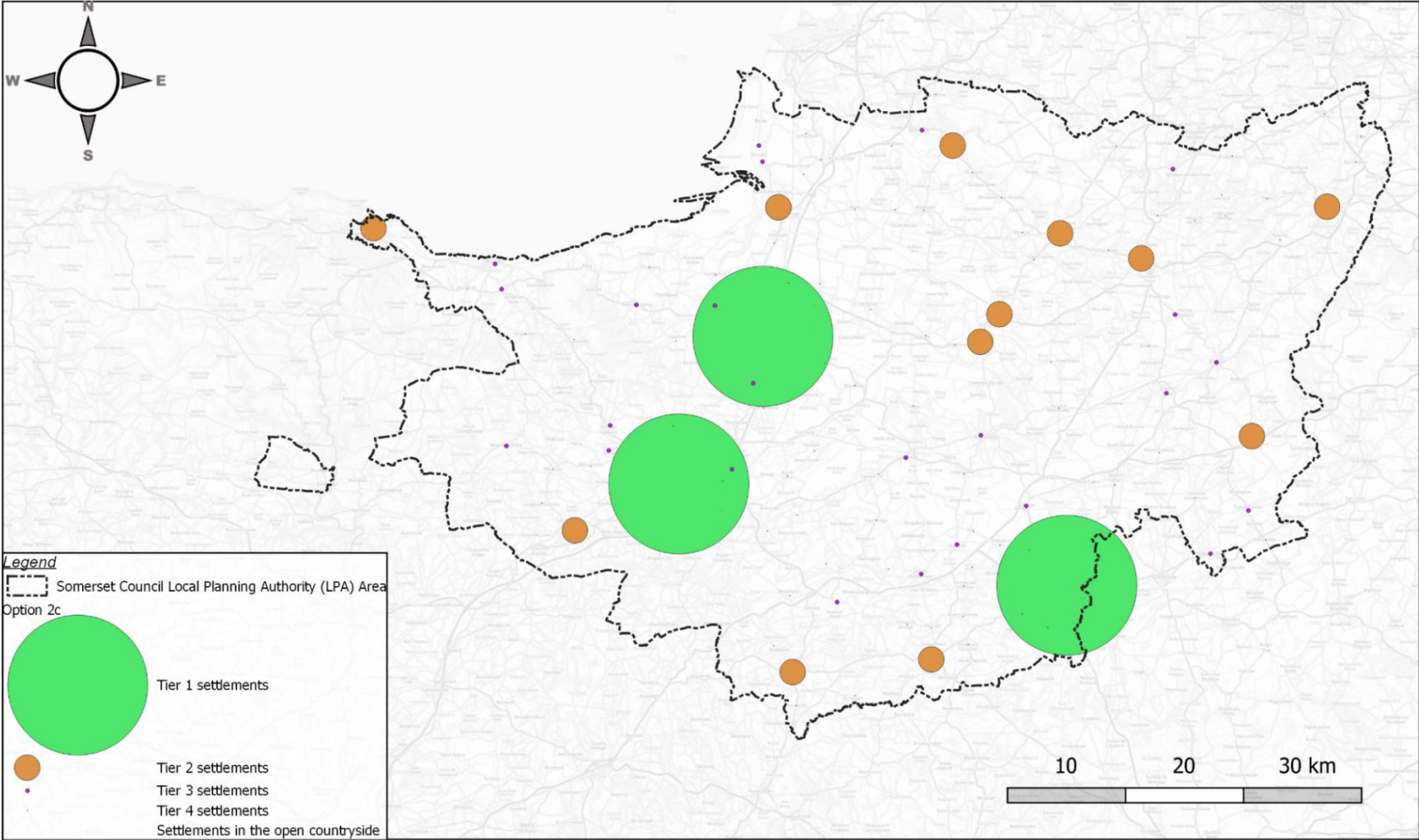
Option 1b - Combined Roll Forward by Settlement



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Option 2c – Tiered Percentage Growth

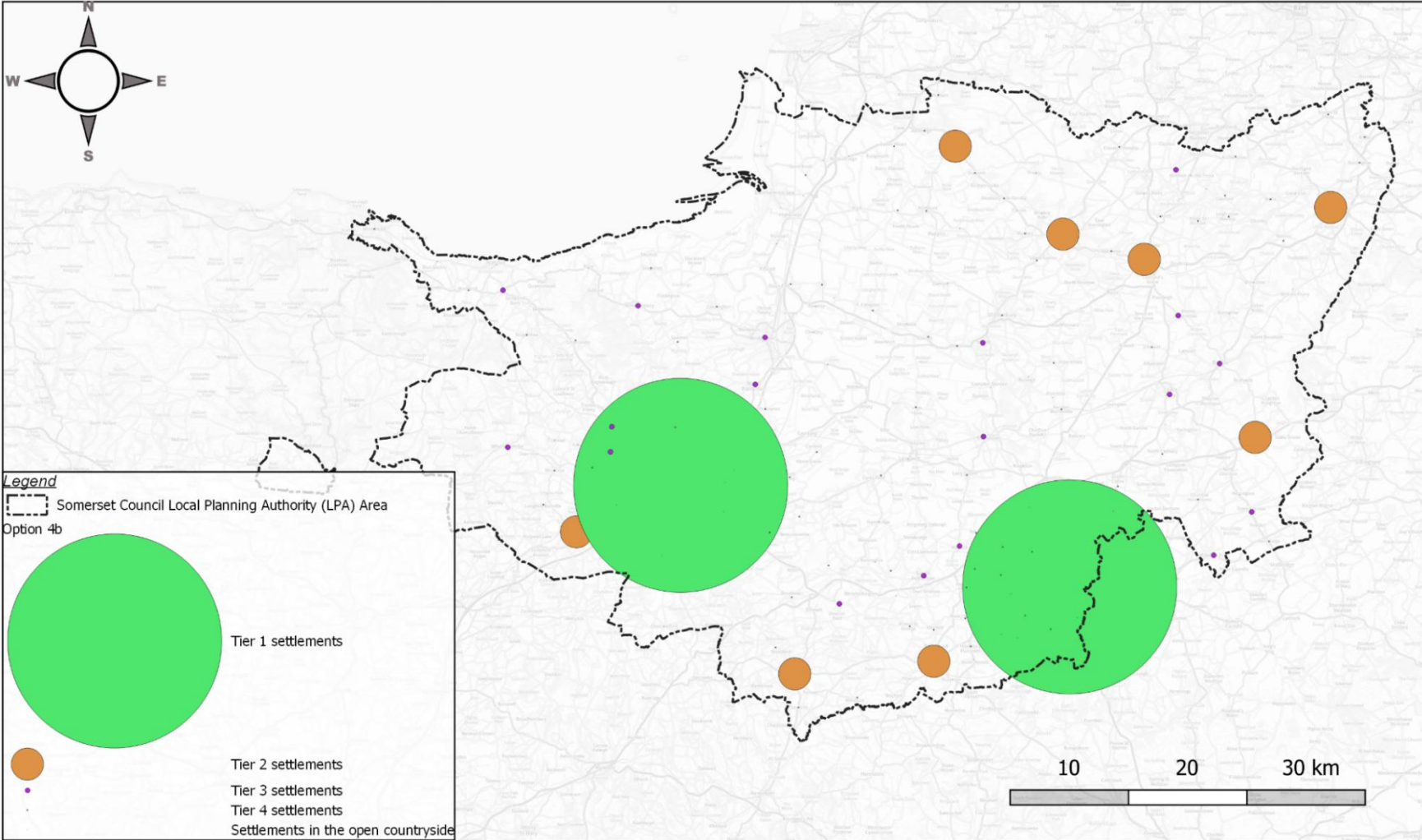
Option 2c - Tiered Percentage Growth



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Option 4b – Climate Resilient

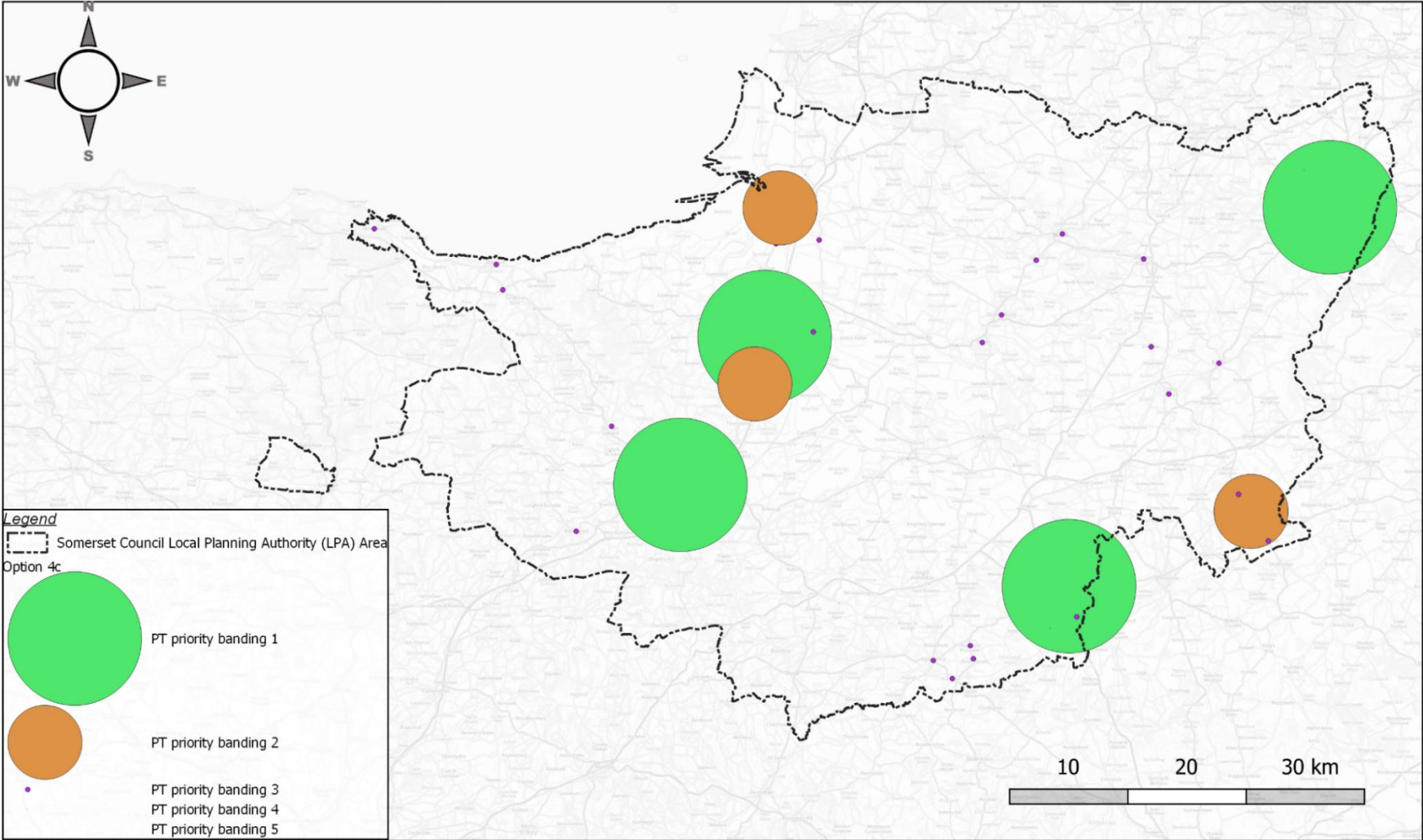
Option 4b - Climate Resilient



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Option 4c – Public Transport Corridors

Option 4c - Public Transport Corridors



Legend

--- Somerset Council Local Planning Authority (LPA) Area

Option 4c

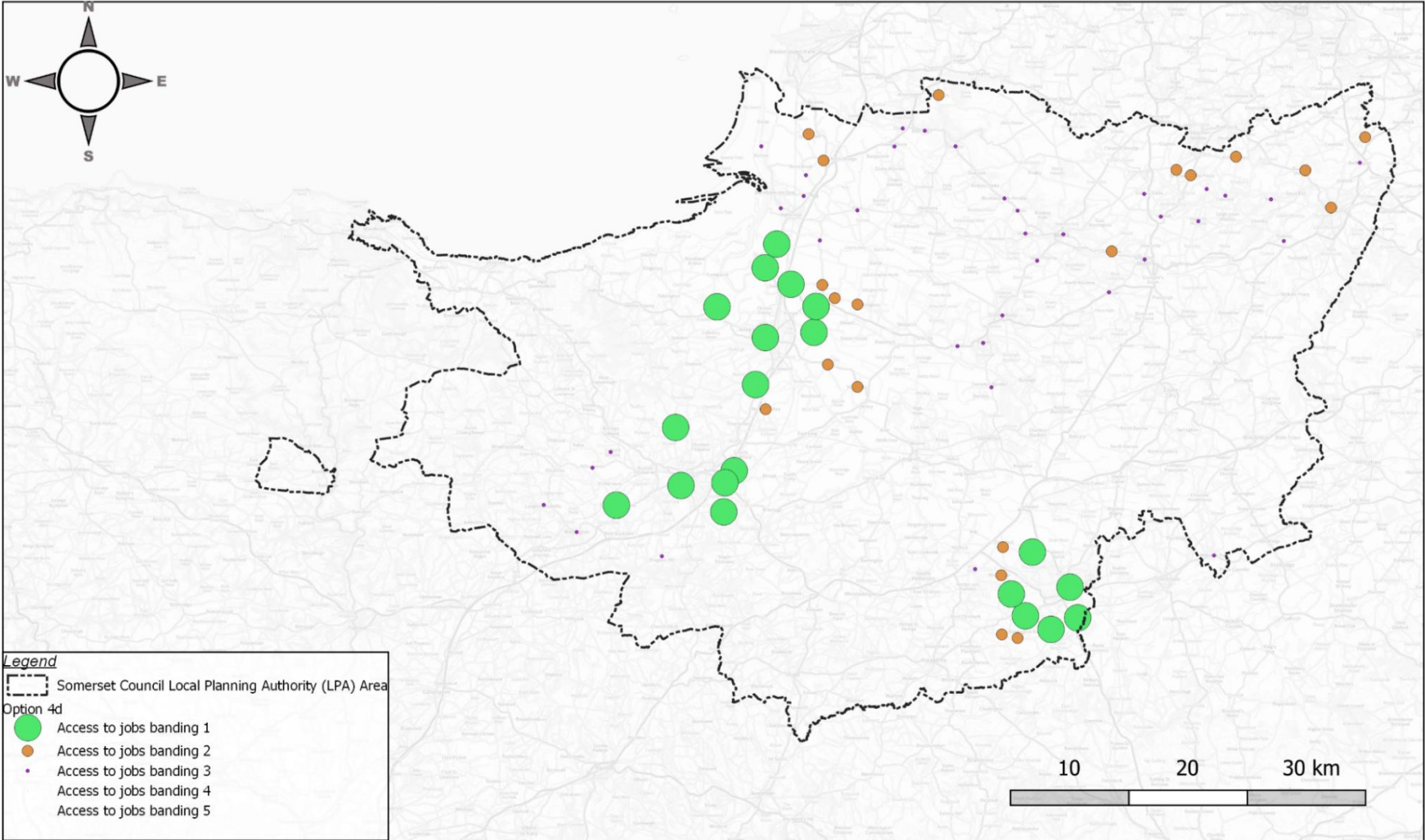
- PT priority banding 1
- PT priority banding 2
- PT priority banding 3
- PT priority banding 4
- PT priority banding 5



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Option 4d – Job Opportunity Focus

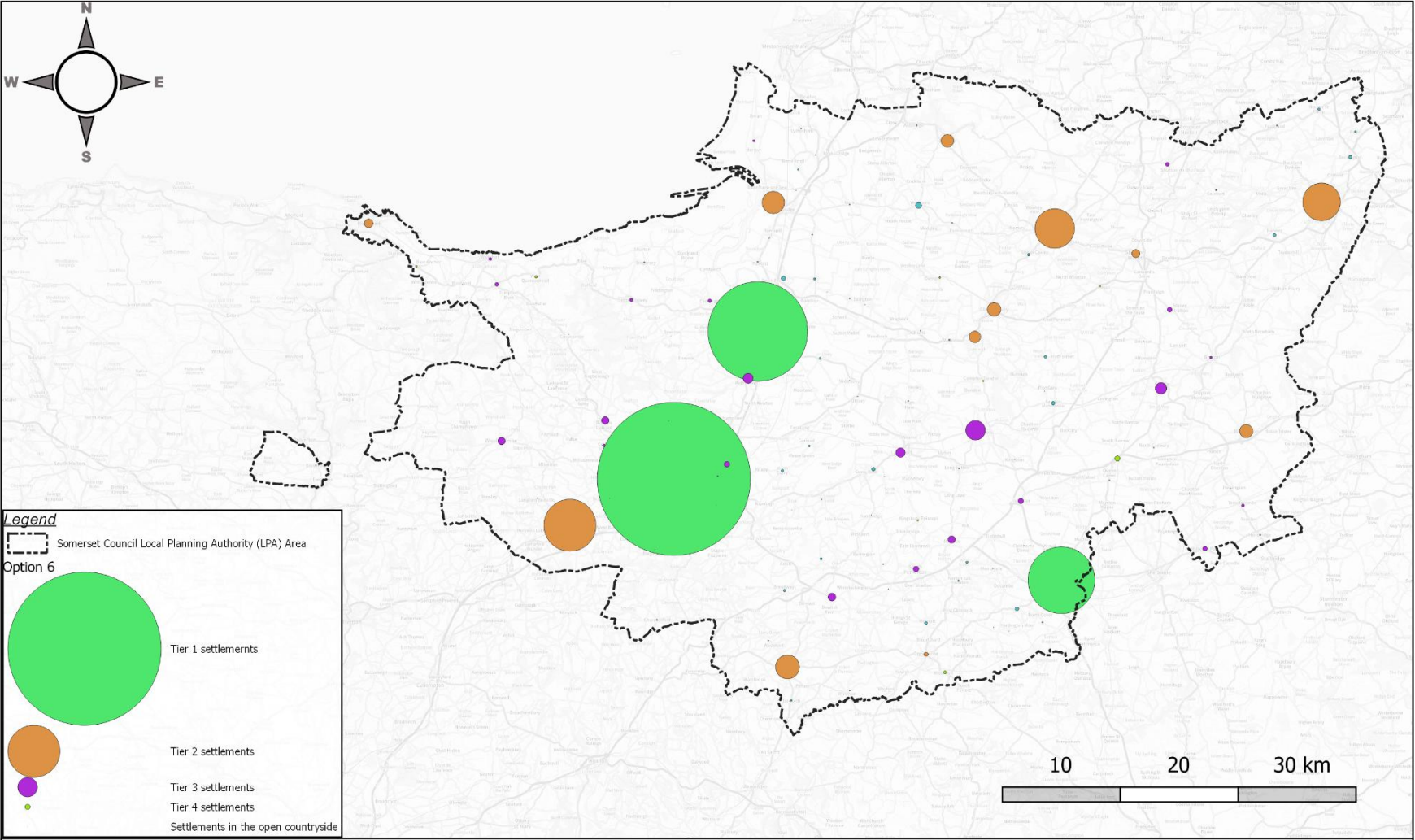
Option 4d - Job Opportunity Focus



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Option 6 – Real World Delivery

Option 6 - Real World Delivery



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