

North Somerset Council  
**Local Development Framework**

Weston Town Centre  
Area Action Plan  
Issues and Options

**Consultation Statement**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION.

North Somerset Council is producing an Area Action Plan for Weston Town Centre, as identified in the Local Development Scheme as part of the Local Development Framework.

The Issues and Options document went out to consultation in October/November 2007 and the details and findings of the consultation process are set out in this report.

## 2. CONSULTATION OBJECTIVES.

The Weston Town Centre Issues and Options stage began in February 2007, and is a *further* Issues and Options consultation building on the initial Weston wide Issues and Options consultation which was undertaken in September 2006. It expands on the issues raised through this consultation and presents a more detailed site specific document which focuses on key sites and town centre regeneration opportunities.

Meetings, workshops and discussions were held with various stakeholders and organisations and internal and external consultees to establish emerging issues from this time onwards (this is shown in the Consultation and Engagement record at Appendix 2). In order to provide a mechanism for focussing wider debate an Issues and Options document was produced for consultation.

The consultation objectives were:

- To identify potential development sites within the town centre, seafront and gateway area, and suggest potential development options for those sites for discussion purposes.
- To widely communicate the key messages relating to the regeneration of the town centre, in terms of the current issues facing the town, the facts and figures about Weston and to put forward a long term Vision for Weston-super-Mare town centre.
- To give stakeholders and interested parties the opportunity to fully engage in the consultation.
- To seek and obtain responses to the Issues and Options document in order to gauge public opinion, and gauge potential private developer interest in the sites identified.

### 3. METHODOLOGY.

- 500 copies of the Town Centre Area Action Plan Issues and Options document were produced. These were distributed to Specific Consultation Bodies, Local Members and Local Libraries. Copies were available from Somerset House reception in Weston-super-Mare town centre, and the document was available to download from North Somerset website. Copies of the document were also made available in large print, Braille or audio format on request.
- An online consultation was also launched giving people the option to submit their comments to the document online.
- 600 Leaflets summarising the document were also produced and distributed during the exhibitions and made available in Somerset House reception and local libraries. Leaflets were also distributed to doctors, dentist surgeries and community buildings around Weston-super-Mare and posters were displayed in public areas advertising the consultation.
- Two staffed public exhibitions were held to promote the document. One was held at the Winter Gardens on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2007 from 2.00pm – 7.00pm and the other at the Sovereign Shopping Centre on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2007 from 8:30am – 5:30pm. These were staffed by planning officers and the exhibitions consisted of large display boards along with copies of the document and leaflet to distribute. Verbal comments which were received at the exhibitions have been documented and are set out in Appendix 3.
- The exhibition board was also on permanent display to view at various locations around Weston-super-Mare along with copies of the leaflet. These locations included:
  - Weston-super-Mare Town Hall from 9<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> October 2007
  - Sovereign Shopping Centre from 20<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> October 2007
  - The Campus from 29<sup>th</sup> October – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2007
- A group consisting of Weston Town Centre Landowners was set up in March 2007 to engage landowners in the regeneration process in Weston Town Centre. There were five meetings of the group in the lead up to the Issues and Options consultation and each site identified in the document was discussed with the group as well as the issues, the objectives and the Vision. The group will continue to meet in the lead up to the Preferred Options consultation.
- The consultation received extensive local media coverage with a double page spread discussing the sites identified in the AAP in the Weston Mercury on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2007, and an article about the consultation in the Weston and Worle News on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 2007.

Photograph of the Exhibitions:



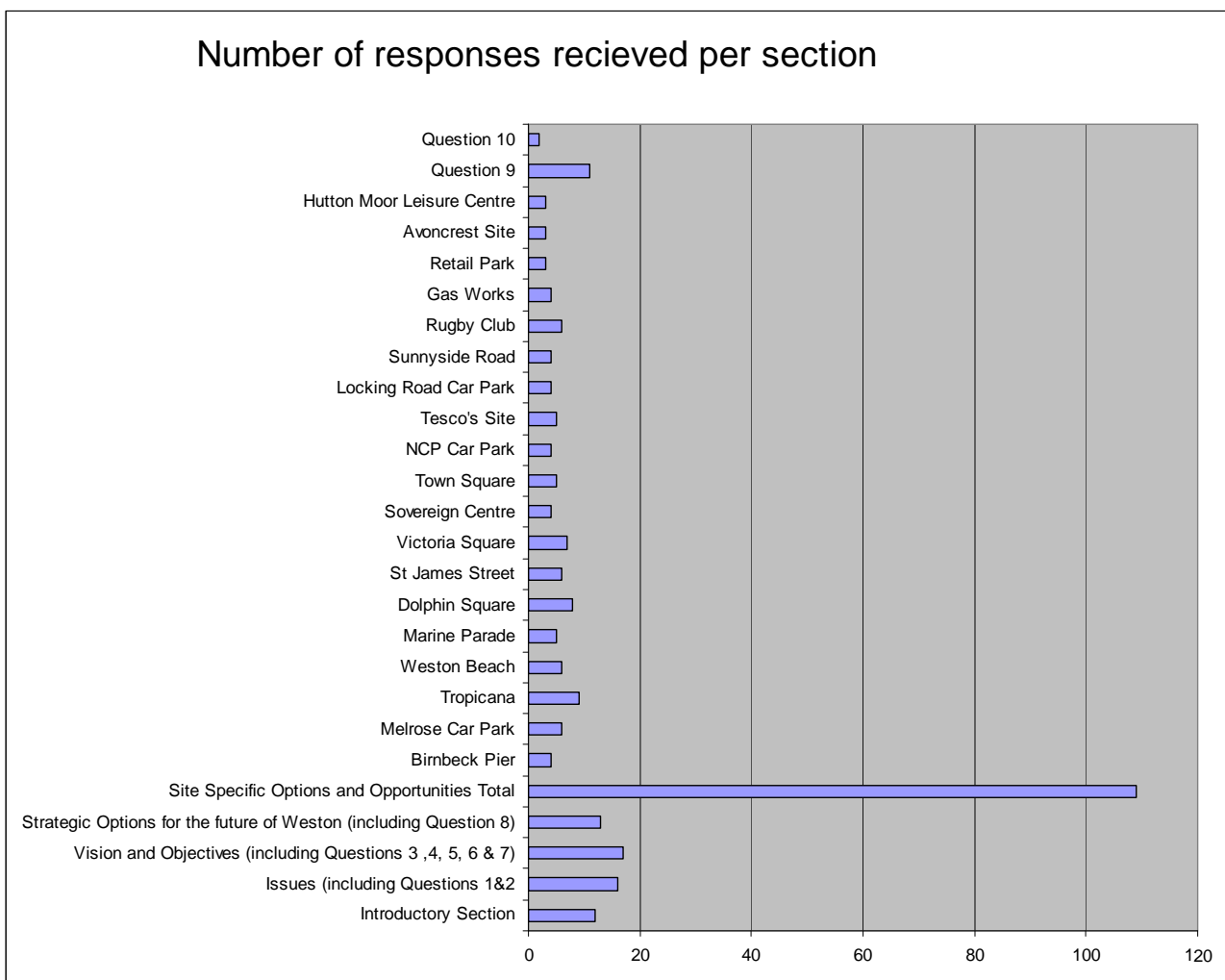
Exhibition at the Sovereign Centre, Weston-super-Mare, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

#### 4. RESPONSE LEVELS.

North Somerset Council received 35 responses to the consultation equalling 167 representations. Of these 31 people responded by e-mail/post and 4 people responded using the new online consultation system.

All the comments which have been made on the document as part of the Issues and Options consultation can be viewed via the Council's online consultation system at [www.consult-ldf.n-somerset.gov.uk](http://www.consult-ldf.n-somerset.gov.uk). In addition, a schedule of individual comments is also available on the Local Development Framework pages of the Council's website.

The chart below shows the number of comments that were received in relation to each section of the document.



## 5. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES RAISED.

- General agreement with list of issues, particularly in terms of more and better quality retail floorspace needed in the town centre.
- Tension between need for mixed use development including residential in the town centre in order to deliver viable redevelopment schemes, and current employment-led policies in the Replacement Local Plan.
- A number of respondents commented that there wasn't enough detail on future housing policies within the town centre, including affordable housing.
- Nine comments were received specifically about the Tropicana site. There was concern that reliance on the delivery of a leisure scheme at the Tropicana could preclude the delivery of a leisure complex in the town centre which may be better located in sustainability terms. There were also concerns regarding the scale, size, massing and that the proposals will be out of keeping with Weston's character;
- More information is needed about what type of leisure and cultural facilities Weston might be lacking in order to identify what its future needs might be.
- A number of respondents commented that there needs to be more recognition of the historic environment in the document, and the contribution it can make to the regeneration process.
- Car Parking and the potential loss of car parks through the redevelopment of sites was raised as a concern.
- There should be more details on the Green Infrastructure within the town centre.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The comments received in response to the Weston Town Centre Area Action Plan Issues and Options consultation were generally supportive of the Vision and Objectives set out in the document. No additional sites were put forward through the consultation process.

The next step in the production of the Area Action Plan is to evaluate the comments received and incorporate changes, amendments and suggestions that have arisen through the issues and options consultation into the Preferred Options document.

The Council will be using the comments and information received through the Issues and Options consultation and the evidence base in order to formulate more detailed policies and guidance for Weston-super-Mare Town Centre which will deliver the objectives set out in the document. These will be set out in the Preferred Options document which will be available for public consultation in September/October 2008.

APPENDIX 1:  
SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

**A1.1 Introductory Section**

**12 comments** were received in relation to this Section. Key issues raised by respondents included:

- Disagreement with the statement that WSM meets day to day shopping needs.
- It is dangerous and potentially unhelpful for there to be an acknowledgement in the Facts Section that not all of the retail floor space needs to be accommodated within the boundary of the existing Town Centre.
- Weston has enough bars and possibly clubs too with extended licensing. Restaurants are well catered for too, however there is a distinct lack of upmarket venues.
- I thought the first half of the document analysed and set out the current problems and issues with the Town Centre very well.
- It is essential that the regeneration of Weston-super-Mare progresses on a whole town basis.

## A1.2 Issues Section Including Questions 1 and 2.

**16 comments** were received in relation to this Section. Key issues raised by respondents included:

- Agreement with the retail issues identified.
- The document should mention Green Infrastructure such as parks and green spaces which will also contribute to the quality of life and the visual impact of the town centre area.
- New development needs to be flexible enough to respond to future changes in use, life style and demography. This means designing for energy and resource efficiency, creating flexibility in the use of property, public spaces and service infrastructure and introducing new approaches to transportation, traffic management and parking.
- More information needed about what type of leisure and cultural facilities Weston might be lacking and so what its future needs may be.
- Welcome the recognition within the consultation document that the cultural and creative economy is an important contributor to Weston's tourism economy.
- The inaccessibility of the town centre is a key constraint and therefore reducing the reliance on the private car should be an important objective of its redevelopment.
- There is a lack of reference or understanding of the historic environment's role in regeneration.
- The plan would benefit from a stronger link between the main issues identified (especially deprivation) and the vision and objectives.
- The issues listed are comprehensive in all the categories and the correct sites have been identified. The options give a wide range of balanced redevelopment and vision for the town.
- Flood Risk, Bathing Water Standards, Waste, Contaminated Land and Conservation are all issues which need to be considered as part of the Area Action Plan.
- The provision of additional housing, and in particular affordable housing, should be included as an issue and objective, as well as being given serious consideration in all of the listed potential development sites.

### A1.3 Vision and Objectives.

**17 comments** were received in relation to the Vision and Objectives Section of the document. The Responses have been broken down by each question in this section.

#### **Question 3: What is your Vision for Weston-super-Mare town centre over the next twenty years?**

6 responses were received in relation to this question. Key issues raised by respondents included:

- Improve links to other towns/reduce crime/more vibrant shopping and leisure.
- Must have a Vision that is deliverable.
- The Vision should promote the aspiration of creating an integrated and sustainable transport network.
- Support for the Council's aim for Weston-super-Mare town centre to perform a sub-regional role. In particular the objective to seek to capitalise on its seaside location and future tourist growth is fully supported.
- The balance between jobs and homes is unlikely to be achievable on all sites and may stymie regeneration initiatives and fail to demonstrate a deliverable five year housing supply.

#### **Question 4: What is good about Weston-Super-Mare town centre and should be promoted?**

1 response was received in relation to this question.

- My favourite things about Weston are the beach/coastline/green spaces. We should aim/promote niche affluent tourism i.e. business market.

#### **Question 5: What tourism market should Weston-super-Mare aim for?**

1 response was received in relation to this question.

- Weston should target existing tourists and develop the retail offer to complement the major tourist events.

#### **Question 6: Are these the right objectives?**

4 responses were received in relation to this question. Key issues raised by respondents included:

- Park and Ride facility should be a firm priority.
- There is scope within the objectives to include further reference to the reduction in use of the private car. There is capacity to promote increased connectivity between the main train station, bus station and town centre facilities through walk ways and cycle ways.
- The first bullet point concerning the increased provision for mixed use town centre retail and leisure development should be highlighted as the key priority and given much stronger emphasis.

#### **Question 7: Should there be additional Objectives?**

5 responses were received in relation to this question. Key issues raised by respondents included:

- A further objective should be to seek protection and enhancement of the environment, to reduce and manage flood risk, and to improve the quality of habitat for biodiversity interests, while taking into account climate change.

- A number of possible design options could be set out for how key sites might be redeveloped.
- The issue of housing provision is absent from the document.
- The document would be greatly enhanced by the objectives being more measurable with possible targets of how proposals will actually be delivered, what the obstacles are for delivery and how they will be overcome.
- The Objectives re-establishing the role of Weston as a tourist destination, strengthening its physical and visual connections and improving the fabric by raising the quality of design should clearly recognise the role of the historic environment in the regeneration.

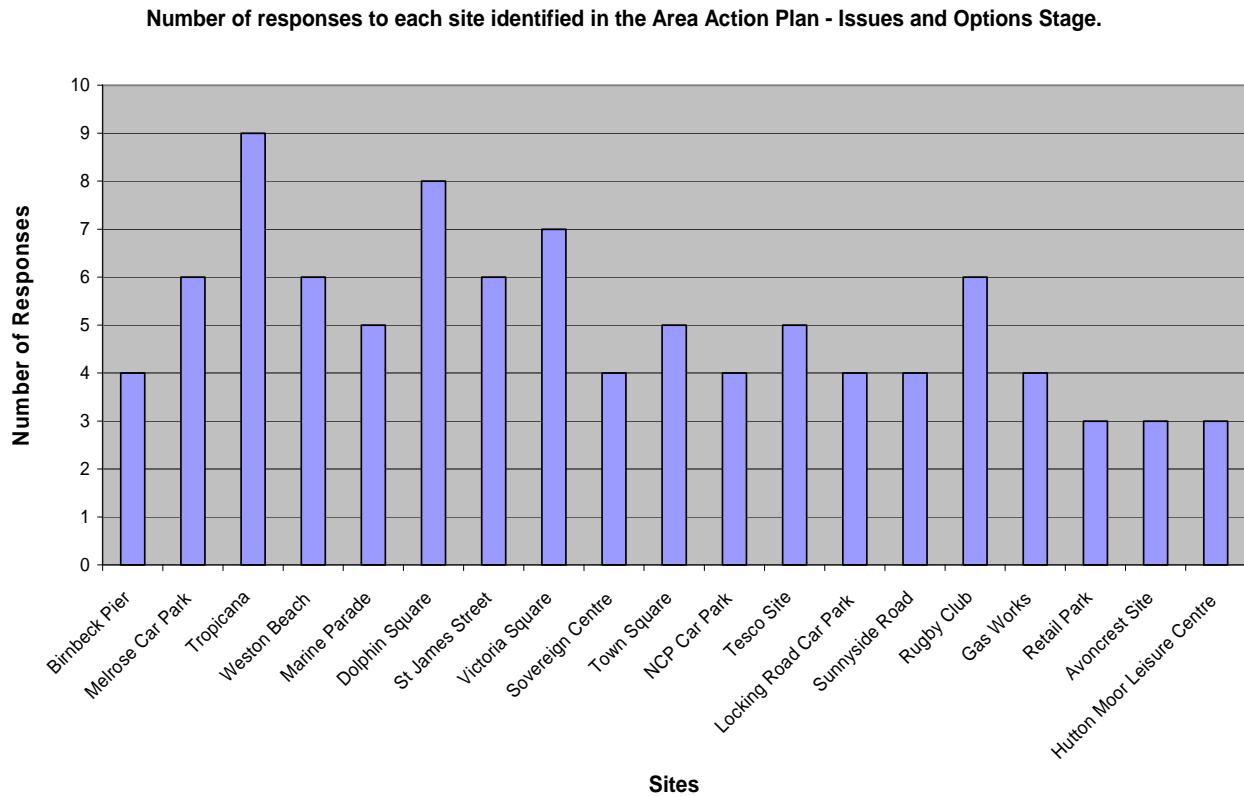
#### A1.4 Strategic Options for the future of Weston-super-Mare as a major retail and tourism destination, including Question 8: Are these the right Options for the future?

**13 comments** were received in relation to this question. The key issues raised by respondents included:

- Attract more affluent clientele to Weston.
- More niche businesses and don't develop on town square
- Tourism and retail options shouldn't be mutually exclusive.
- More effort should be made to keep Weston tidy.
- Concern that future development would not add to the significant pressure on the strategic road network, in particular Junction 21 of the M5.
- We would welcome that the retail option recognises the town centre as the main focus for further retail development.
- Transport facilities should be a major consideration and it is vital that town centre retail compliments Weston's tourist trade.
- Orchard Meadows trading should be supported and encouraged and major department stores encouraged. However development of the Italian Gardens must be resisted in order to preserve it for social and cultural reasons.
- The retail options seek to dictate to the market place the type of retail development for the town which is likely to frustrate inward investment and therefore hinder the regeneration objectives for the town.
- Encourage independent shops, no more landmark buildings, sort out congestion and parking problems, any new builds must be good quality and in harmony with their surroundings.

## A1.5 Site Specific Options and Opportunities.

**109 comments** were received specifically about the 19 sites identified, including questions 9 & 10. The graph below shows the number of comments received for each site.



The key issues for each site from respondents included:

### **Birnbeck Pier:**

4 comments received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- Supportive of regeneration proposals.
- promotion of land side area for hotel and residential development.
- Scheme should be leisure driven to include fishing, boating, food & drink, family entertainment, evening entertainment, a very large function room(s), fitness centre, personal watercraft rentals, museum, theatre, etc

### **Melrose Car Park:**

6 comments received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- A number of people believe this site should be left as a car park.
- Others think it should be redeveloped, and include the adjacent putting green as part of the site.

### **Tropicana:**

9 comments received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- Agreement that Tropicana needs to be redeveloped but concerns with scale, size, massing and that the proposals will be out of keeping with Weston's character;

- General feeling that the uses proposed at Tropicana would be better suited on a site within the town centre and that locating the proposed uses at the Tropicana site would have a detrimental impact on the town centre.
- A number of people just want a swimming pool with a retractable roof on this site.

#### **Weston Beach:**

6 comments received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- General consensus that the beach is Weston's biggest asset and should be promoted as an events space.

#### **Marine Parade:**

5 comments received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- Beach Lawns are a designated wildlife site.
- Beach Lawns supports nationally scarce plants which require relict sand dune conditions. We would oppose any loss of this site and advise continuing with its current management arrangements, i.e. avoidance of fertiliser, topsoil, herbicide and shading etc.

#### **Dolphin Square:**

8 comments received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- Recognition that this is a prime town centre site with huge regeneration potential.
- Mixed use development supported
- Support for retail development on this site.
- Redevelopment needs to include adequate car parking.

#### **St James St Area:**

6 comments received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- Suggested pedestrianising this street to encourage café culture.
- Properties fronting Beach Road are in need of redevelopment.

#### **Victoria Square:**

7 comments received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- Promoted for retail-led mixed use scheme by Victoria Square Landowners Consortium.
- Some support for Expanding Sovereign Centre onto this site.
- General agreement that this site should be redeveloped.

#### **Sovereign Centre:**

4 comments were received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- It is not appropriate to expand the Sovereign Centre onto the seafront.
- Sovereign Centre could include a department store on Town Square.
- Expand the Sovereign Centre onto Victoria Square and join the seafront to the High Street.
- The Sovereign Centre should not expand onto Town Square.

#### **Town Square:**

5 comments received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- Support for keeping open space in Town Square
- Some support for allowing redevelopment on Town Square, if needed, to accommodate the retail offer needed in the town centre.

**NCP Car Park Site:**

4 comments received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- Loss of car parking issue. A number of people thought this site should be redeveloped, but the car parking would have to be replaced.
- Suggestion to remove buses and pedestrianise area between Big Lamp Corner and Alexandra Parade with some redevelopment on that corner.

**Tesco's Site:**

5 comments received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- General agreement that a food store should stay in this location, but more car parking is needed on this site.
- Suggestions of developing a multi-storey on this site, wrapped with mixed use development to create a frontage to Francis Fox Road/Station Road.

**Locking Road:**

4 comments received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- Number of suggestions for an integrated bus terminal at this site.
- Issue over loss of car parking – would we be able to accommodate enough car parking within the scheme, and if not where would it go?
- Need to find alternative site for coach and lorry parking, if this site were redeveloped, or accommodate these facilities on the site.

**Sunnyside Road Site:**

4 comments received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- Suggestions for a number of uses on this site including offices, residential, budget hotel, new police station and medical centre.
- Opportunity for landmark development.

**Rugby Club:**

6 comments were received in relation to this site. Comments included:

- Support for principle of potential relocation of rugby club, but concerns over loss of playing fields.
- Promotion of the whole of the Recreation Ground, incorporating site 15, for mixed use development.
- Rugby club site should remain a sporting/leisure facility and a new Health Centre should be developed on the Drove Road frontage.
- Suggestion to use this site for shopping facilities with a Park and Ride facility.

**Gas Works:**

4 comments were received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- NGPHL objects to the inclusion of the office uses and the exclusion of retailing on this site, as well as the suggestion that the existing gasometers could be reused to create a desired landmark feature.
- Site could be used for car parking.
- Agreement that the site does not provide an attractive approach to Weston.

**Retail Park:**

3 comments were received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- The main road into town should bypass the 'out of town retail park' and not run through the middle of it so visitors have a better impression of Weston when approaching the town centre.

- The necessity to drive from shop to shop does not lend itself to a good shopping experience. The lack of pedestrian access throughout the 'retail park' should be re-considered.

**Avoncrest Site:**

3 comments were received in relation to this site. Issues included:

- Promotion of the site for a mixed use scheme comprising employment, retail and leisure uses.
- Site could be used as an extension for entertainment facilities.

**Hutton Moor Leisure Centre:**

3 comments received in relation to this site. Comments included:

- Concerns over loss of playing fields if the leisure centre is expanded.
- Keep this site as a leisure centre.

**Questions 9 and 10:**

**Have we identified the right sites for potential redevelopment/improvement and the right options for each site?**

**Are there other sites which would be suitable for redevelopment which would enhance Weston town centre, seafront and gateway areas?**

13 comments were received in relation to these questions. No other sites were put forward, but some suggestions included:

- The AAP should make provision for a new bus station.
- There needs to be protected cycle ways that go both North-South and East-West and not just lined off strips on the edge of existing roads but separate, protected routes for cycles.
- The AAP in its present form is a list of small development site opportunities and will not deliver the step change required.

Appendix 2:

Consultation / Engagement Record (2007 onwards)

Date	General topic area	With whom	Nature of Event	Outcomes
20.03.07 24.04.07 05.06.07 24.07.07 09.11.07 06.03.08	Weston Town Centre		Town Centre Landowners Meetings	Ongoing discussions regarding the regeneration of Weston Town Centre
12.06.07	Tourism in Weston	Meeting with Ursula James from destination Management	Preliminary Discussions re: Tourism Data	Discuss tourism evidence base and joint working in terms of Weston branding/vision
21.06.07	Car Parking in Weston	Meeting with Allan Taylor and Rob Thompson	Discussions over car parking situation in the town centre and DPE and CPZ plans.	Data Sharing.
02.08.07 - 16.08.07	Weston Town Centre AAP	Internal Consultation	Internal Consultation	To address issues concerns of other sections/departments within NSC on this document.
05.10.07	Weston Town Centre AAP	Avon and Somerset Constabulary	Meeting	To discuss the future needs of the police within the plan period
25.10.07	Core Strategy & Weston AAP	Demist	Presentation to NSC officers	
6.11.07	Core Strategy & Weston AAP	Federation of Small Business	Presentation	Contacts established – will encourage feedback & continual engagement.
28.11.07	Core Strategy & Weston AAPs	Bristol Fire Authority	Meeting with fire officers to discuss future development proposals, implications for the service.	Fire service to be kept up to date and invited to comment on emerging proposals.
23.11.07 & 05.02.08	Weston Town Centre AAP and Regeneration Area	CYPSS	Meeting to discuss future education requirements during the plan period.	Initial requirements discussed – discussions will be ongoing.

<b>22.01.07 26.02.08</b>	<b>Members Steering Group</b>	<b>Local Ward Members and relevant portfolio holders.</b>	<b>Regular meeting to keep local members informed and involved in the production of the plan.</b>	<b>Will meet regularly as the plan progresses.</b>
<b>11.02.08</b>	<b>Weston Town Centre AAP and Regeneration Area</b>	<b>Primary Care Trust</b>	<b>Meeting to discuss future health care requirements during the plan period.</b>	<b>Initial requirements discussed – discussions will be ongoing.</b>
<b>15.02.08</b>	<b>Weston Town Centre AAP and Regeneration Area</b>	<b>Leisure and Open Spaces Team</b>	<b>Meeting to discuss future leisure requirements during the plan period.</b>	<b>Initial requirements discussed – discussions will be ongoing.</b>

## APPENDIX 3:

### VERBAL COMMENTS RECEIVED AT STAFFED EXHIBITIONS.

#### **Weston-super-Mare Winter Gardens Monday 8 October, Staffed 2-7pm**

Discussions included:

- Some of the development sites questioned (Town Square, Locking Road Car Park, Melrose Car Park, Gas works) Town Square is a valued open space in High Street - should be considered in Dolphin Square redevelopment instead. Melrose Car Park is essential for parking in the town-should consider park and ride at the airfield. Because of contamination Gas Works should not be redeveloped for housing
- Suggested road improvements in Weston Town Centre
- Should redevelop Sovereign Centre instead of Town Square
- Maintain green space in town
- Tropicana-concerns about levels of development-hotel would be better on Dolphin Square as would more shops (+St James Street)
- Meadow Street and Orchard Street should be shown as redevelopment opportunity
- Support urban extension on Weston Airfield
- Resources-energy issues solved by nuclear power

#### **Weston-super-Mare Sovereign Centre Saturday 20 October-Sunday 28 October. Staffed Saturday 20, 9am-5.30pm**

Discussions included:

- Should keep Tropicana as Lido-general criticism of latest scheme
- Should make new houses pay for infrastructure
- Need more facilities for children
- No development in Town Square- shopping extension should be seaward side
- Need to resolve congestion around M5 Junction 21
- General concern over infrastructure problems in Weston and need to sort this out first
- Shouldn't emphasise tourism, just make it a better place to live
- How will the council cope with 20 development sites when the Tropicana has taken so long?
- Need to address drug issues
- Beach lawns should be redeveloped for recreational uses
- Street cleaning a big issues in Weston

This publication is available in large print, Braille  
or audio formats on request.

Help is also available for people who require council  
information in languages other than English.

**Please contact 01934 426 177**



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