

Other considerations

Issue 4h (i): Tourism provisions

1. The Core Strategy approach to tourism acknowledges that a combination of location, natural environment, and attractions make North Somerset a popular tourist and visitor destination. Weston-super-Mare is the priority focus for tourism and this is clearly set out in Priority Objective 5. The regeneration of Weston-super-Mare is a key component of the Core Strategy and tourism will play a crucial role in this process. The importance of tourism is reflected through Policy CS22 Tourism Strategy.
2. Policy CS22 supports tourism development throughout North Somerset provided it is appropriate to its location (as identified in criteria 1-4 of the policy) and recognises that it can support economic objectives.
3. Para 3.286 gives an example of potential adverse impacts, stated in criteria 4, which should be avoided. For example an over concentration of holiday accommodation can have adverse impacts on small rural communities by reducing the permanent residential population who support local services and facilities needed by such communities, or by changing the character of the area. It is inappropriate however for the Core Strategy to contain detailed development management policies.
4. Although generally catering for needs other than those of local residents, tourist and visitor facilities and accommodation should respect and be in keeping with the area in which they are to be located. Since development in infill villages and countryside by definition is of a smaller scale than at Service Villages and towns, any new development should be commensurate with this, hence the wording of Vision 7 that new development should be "small scale". This is reflected in criteria 1) to policy CS22 which indicates that tourism developments should be "of an appropriate scale" for their location.
5. It is right that development outside settlement boundaries should be strictly controlled. The Core Strategy follows the approach of PPS4 EC7 in that it supports rural tourism which does not "*harm the character of the countryside, its towns, villages, buildings and other features.*"
6. Core Strategy policies CS32 or CS33 do not specifically deal with tourism development but the emphasis is that development should not take place in the open countryside i.e. outside settlement boundaries. Development proposals should be judged against all policies of the

Core Strategy as well as prevailing national guidance.

7. The Core Strategy is also in accordance with the draft National Planning Policy Framework in the approach to rural tourism stated in para 81: *Support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres*
8. Policy CS22 in the Core Strategy Publication Version (Jan 2011) was intended to apply to proposals for all visitor facilities and accommodation whether these are for new facilities or for the extension and enhancement of existing facilities, but as worded this was not clear. The proposed change PC29 to CS22 has been introduced to remove this ambiguity. Policy CS22 is now proposed to read:

“ **new, improved and replacement visitor and tourist** facilities and accommodation will be supported.....”.

The Council recognises that there is a difference between ‘visitor’ and ‘tourist’ and that it supports appropriate development which increases the attractiveness of the district to both.

Issue 4h (ii): Retail provision

9. Retail provision has arisen as a Core Strategy issue largely due to the pressure for additional retail development in Portishead. North Somerset Council in February 2011 approved a 2,787 m² net Sainsbury supermarket at Serbert Way, Portishead split between 2,230 m² (convenience goods) and 557 m² (comparison). The decision on the application was subsequently quashed following a legal challenge by the Cooperative Group. One of the grounds of challenge was that the results of the 2010 North Somerset Retail Study and not been reported to members and that this study treated the Sainsbury supermarket as a commitment although at the time it did not have planning consent.
10. As a result a revised 2011 North Somerset Retail Study (ED/13) was commissioned. A second identical application in terms of store size has been submitted and awaits determination. Interested parties have been consulted not only on the content of the revised Retail Study but also on an independent assessment of the potential retail impact arising from the proposed Sainsbury store.
11. The retail policy (CS21) in the Core Strategy reflects current government advice as contained in Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Growth. In particular by:

- promoting the vitality and viability of town and other centres;
- applying the sequential approach to site selection;
- assessing the impact of proposals on existing and planned centres;
- developing a hierarchy and network of centres each performing their appropriate role to meet the needs of their catchment;
- assessing the need for town centre use and ensuring there is capacity to accommodate them;
- focusing development in and planning for expansion of existing centres as appropriate;
- planning for new centres of an appropriate scale in areas of significant growth, for example, new local centres at Weston Villages;
- strengthening local centres, particularly in rural areas, by ensuring that there is a range of facilities and that these are retained.

12. The 2010 North Somerset Retail Study assessed the need and demand for additional retail facilities in the major towns of Weston-super-Mare, Nailsea, Clevedon and Portishead. This was revised in 2011 (referred to as the 2011 Revised Study) and new floorspace assessments have been proposed as consequential changes to the Core Strategy (ED/13a).

13. After analysing future population levels, expenditure patterns, shifts in market share and improvements in retail sales density, the 2011 Revised Study identified a strategic requirement for additional retail floorspace in Weston and Portishead. For Weston-super-Mare the situation is summarised in the following table:

WsM	By 2011	By 2016	By 2021	By 2026
Convenience goods (m ² net)	2,110	4,075	5,440	6,872
Comparison goods (m ² net)	-	3,104	11,932	25,656

For Portishead the additional floorspace required up to 2026 is 14,096 m² (net). This figure is made up of retail developments built since 2006, existing commitments and an estimate of additional convenience (1616 m²) and comparison (1826 m²) floorspace requirements contained with the 2011 Revised Study.

14. The additional retail floorspace requirements for both Weston and Portishead are mainly due to the increased housing development proposed at each of these settlements. Although Portishead is constrained by the Green Belt, there are a significant number of unimplemented residential planning consents. In addition, Portishead

has a very low market share when compared to other settlements such as Nailsea and Clevedon and in order to improve consumer choice and limit the loss of trade to other areas additional retail floorspace is justified.

15. The major implication for the North Somerset Core Strategy arising from the Retail Study was to identify the need for additional centres to serve the strategic allocation at Weston Villages. Policy CS21 therefore proposed two new local centres at Winterstoke and Parklands to meet the needs of future residents.
16. As the North Somerset Core Strategy does not define detailed boundaries of retail areas the 2011 revised study will be of more relevance for the emerging Sites and Policies Development Plan Document. This document will define the boundaries of town, district and local centres and will have to have due regard to the future floorspace requirements set out in the 2011 revised study

Issue 4h (iii): Climate Change Provisions

17. The Core Strategy seeks to provide a strategic approach to adapting to, and mitigating the effects of climate change. Policy CS1 sets out an overarching policy that seeks to coordinate action across a range of policy areas such as transport, biodiversity and sustainable construction.
18. An important element of the policy framework are the policies that seek to make development more sustainable, have a reduced energy demand, reduced carbon dioxide emissions (CO₂), and utilise renewable energy. However it is recognised that whilst these issues are important to achieving sustainable development they are one aspect of a wider range of policy objectives and considerations.
19. Policies CS1 and CS2 encourage development to incorporate site-wide renewable energy solutions to provide a proportion of the energy required by the development in a cost-effective way. This is a high level objective and as a principle is in line with national guidance and best practice in place-making. Site-wide renewable energy infrastructure at Weston Villages is a Core Strategy objective and is being investigated through the masterplanning framework.
20. The West of England authorities have jointly commissioned Buro Happold to advise on the feasibility and potential for renewable energy across the sub-region, including North Somerset. A draft has been prepared and the final version is anticipated in December 2011. This will support the further policy formulation through the Weston Villages SPD and the Sites and Policies DPD.
21. Policy CS2 includes a requirement that seeks the provision of on-site renewable energy provision and sets out thresholds where certain

percentages will be required (a 'Merton' style policy). The policy is technology neutral so as not to be unduly restrictive. The existing Replacement Local Plan currently has a similar policy (GDP/3) that has been implemented with reasonable success.

22. Most concern with the policy has been the additional cost burden particularly for small scale residential developments (1-9 dwellings). In response to this the policy approach set out in the Core Strategy seeks to put in place a threshold allowing schemes of less than 10 dwellings to deliver a reduced percentage. In addition, reduced percentages may be negotiated where supported by viability evidence.
23. Other CS2 policy requirements relate to the application of sustainability standards including the Code for Sustainable Homes and Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM). These are industry standard measures that seek to enhance the sustainability of new buildings.
24. With regard to the Code for Sustainable Homes, the levels proposed in the Core Strategy are aligned to nationally proposed enhancements to the Building Regulations Part L on energy efficiency. The Core Strategy reflects the Government's aspirations for the delivery zero carbon homes, and are not considered to hinder the viability of development. Recent cost analysis set out in the CLG report 'Cost of Building to the Code for Sustainable Homes – updated costs' August 2011 indicates broadly consistent costs in achieving the various Code Levels over the last two years. However, the cost of renewable technology installations has reduced largely as a result of increased production and better supply chains.
25. Airport related climate change issues are dealt with in position statement HD/17 Issue 3h.