



Challenges and Choices Part 2

Choices for the future

Alternative Approaches

Methodology Paper

November 2020

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1. Background

North Somerset Council has commenced work on its new local plan. Upon adoption, the North Somerset Local Plan 2038 will identify the development requirements 2023 to 2038 including the housing, employment, community uses and supporting infrastructure required to facilitate sustainable growth.

This paper sets out methodology behind the set of spatial growth approaches presented in the Choices consultation (November 2020).

The assessment of broad, realistic alternative approaches for the distribution of growth is an important early stage of the local plan preparation. The identification and testing of these can inform the selection of the most sustainable and effective strategy for accommodating the required growth, in line with the strategic priorities of the plan. Once a preferred spatial strategy is identified, more detailed sites and opportunities which would deliver the spatial strategy can then be considered.

A clear and robust spatial strategy, derived from an assessment of the alternative approaches available, will provide a framework for future site assessment. Should identified sites fail to come forward in the future, the spatial strategy will be used to assess potential alternatives.

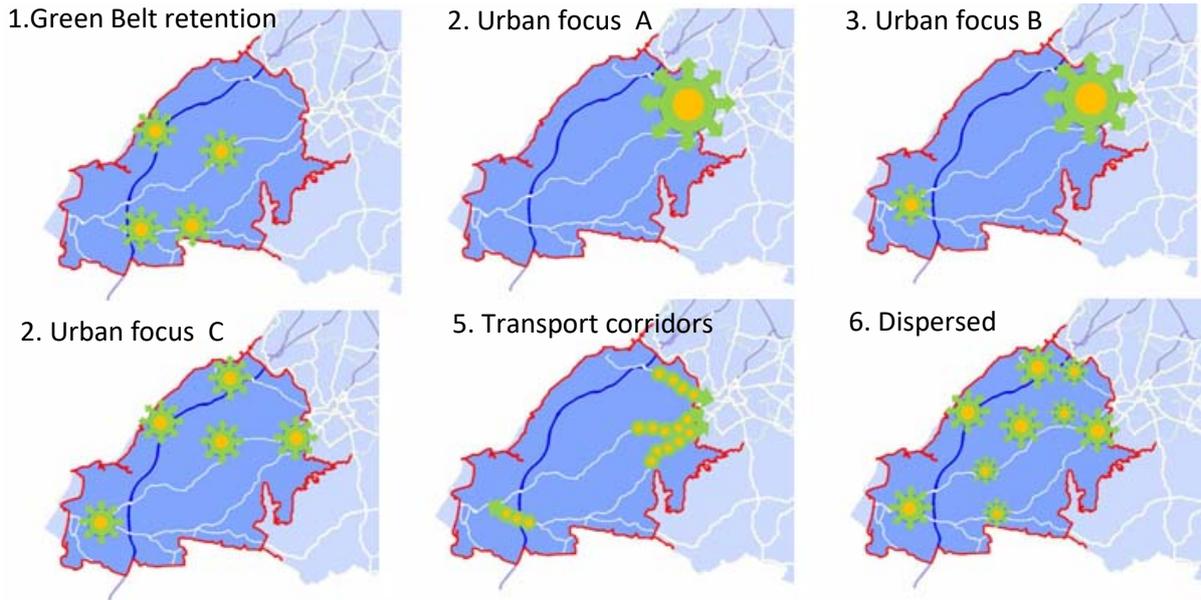
2. Defining the key methodological steps

2a: Identifying strategies for growth

The first stage of shaping the approaches was the identification of a set of strategies for growth. This task was approached with an open mind and was intended in very general terms to identify the principal alternative approaches that would provide the framework for how locations and sites would be considered. The intention was to provide a set of broad approaches which were distinctly different to enable the relative strengths and weakness of each to be considered. This would then help to inform the selection of the preferred spatial strategy.

April Executive

A series of potential strategies for growth were identified early on in the plan-making process and formed the basis for the six approaches set out in April 2020 Executive Report on the Challenges and Choices document. These were captured illustratively in the following concept diagrams. These comprised a strategy for retention of Green Belt, three variations of an urban focus, a transport corridor strategy, and a dispersed strategy. They were based on an existing understanding of the issues and opportunities facing North Somerset and were not related to any specific housing requirement target.



At Executive Committee on 29 April 2020 the decision was taken to undertake the consultation in two stages with the consultation on the Challenges held over the Summer, and the consultation on Choices to follow in the autumn 2020.

Review of the approaches for the Choices document

Following the Challenges consultation, the six alternatives proposed were reviewed. It was considered that the three variations related to different approaches to concentrating development at the urban areas needed to be simplified to make the differences between the approaches more distinct. As a result, the number of approaches was reduced to four, with the replacement of the previous three urban focus variations (2, 3, and 4 set out in the Executive report and papers) by a single approach.

The suggested approaches all have a clear spatial dimension which can be summarised as:

- A strategy to safeguard the existing Green Belt by identifying potential development opportunities elsewhere.
- A strategy to focus growth in a smaller number of larger-scale sites at the urban areas, which explores growth opportunities at the towns and also the edge of Bristol.
- A strategy of exploring potential growth along key public transport corridors where investment could unlock growth, and more sustainable modes could support access into Weston-super-Mare and Bristol.
- A strategy of dispersal where a larger number of smaller-scale opportunities are spread more evenly across the plan area.

These four broad strategies underpin the approaches set out in the Choices consultation document. It is accepted that additional strategies may emerge from the Choices consultation, and taking into account further work, and that eventually the preferred spatial strategy may be a hybrid comprising different elements. It is important that the preferred spatial strategy eventually identified is able to be clearly defined and robust and provide a logical context for site investigation and selection.

With the four approaches identified, the next step was to consider how to illustrate what the broad extent and pattern of development might look like. At this stage the process is testing 'places', not specific sites or locations.

2b: Identification of places

At an early stage a 'long-list' of places were identified that would be considered as potential opportunities for growth through the preparation of the Local Plan. This was intended to be as inclusive as possible and comprised those settlements listed below which included all but the smallest settlements. In addition to the identification of places related to existing settlements, three other potential growth areas were identified based upon known development opportunities. These were east of Weston-super-Mare, north of Churchill, and South West Bristol. These represent known strategic-scale opportunities and their identification as distinct places is intended to allow them to be considered in their own right.

Additional places may be identified at a later stage, for example, in response to call for sites and/or consultation representations, and in light of further work to identify site opportunities.

List of North Somerset 'places'

- Weston-super-Mare
- Clevedon
- Portishead
- Nailsea
- Backwell
- Banwell
- Claverham
- Cleeve
- Churchill / Lower Langford
- Congresbury
- Dundry
- Easton-in-Gordano
- Felton
- Flax Bourton
- Kewstoke
- Long Ashton
- Sandford
- Winford
- Winscombe
- Wrington
- Yatton
- Abbots Leigh
- Blagdon
- Clapton-in-Gordano
- Failand
- Kingston Seymour
- Portbury
- Tickenham
- Uphill
- Locking
- Kenn
- Hutton
- Bleadon
- East of Weston-super-Mare
- North of Churchill
- South West Bristol

2c: Attributing places to the four approaches

With the broad approaches identified, the method then sought to assign places to each to illustrate what the pattern of development might look like. This reflected early work undertaken through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, namely the availability of land across North Somerset identified through an initial site review and identification phase (published separately in the interim SHLAA). This was also informed by a high-level review of key constraints to development, termed Primary Constraints within which, development will not be considered further. The Primary Constraints are listed in the SHLAA interim report published alongside the Choices consultation.

This stage identified those places from the list above where there is known potential to investigate either as a single site or a number of locations and which would illustrate opportunities in respect of each approach.

2d: Approach to identifying broad scales of growth to each place

At this stage the approaches are utilising broad assumptions of potential capacity (capacity bands) that will be investigated further as plan-making progresses. The availability of sites, and scale of opportunity is indicated in the SHLAA interim report. The next stages of the SHLAA will explore in more detail the capacity from specific sites and this will refine the thinking on the specific opportunity at each place. At this stage, broad capacity bands have been used as a means of indicating the potential opportunity available subject to further investigation.

The approach took the following steps:

- Understanding the overall scale of growth required to be accommodated in the plan. For housing, this assumed application of the current Standard Methodology which equates to 1365 dwellings per year or around 20,475 over the plan period. The net figure is suggested to be about 15,475 dwellings. For employment, this is currently being informed by economic forecasting and other evidence to indicate future prospects and associated land requirements. At this stage there isn't an agreed requirement for employment growth in terms of the amount of land or jobs required. However, each approach seeks to identify a broad range of employment opportunities which would be sufficient to meet future business needs.
- Identification of broad capacity bands to be attributed to each place within each approach. These bands of capacity were identified as housing up to 500 and 500 to 1500, and large-scale mixed use 1500 to 3000, 3000 to 5000 and 5000+ dwellings. These allow for the identification of broad scales of growth at each place reflecting current knowledge of potential opportunities available. Further work through the SHLAA will investigate capacity in greater detail. Table 1 provides a description of each capacity band.
- Potential Growth Areas (PGAs) are identified on the diagrams. For the most part these relate to the 'places' except at the towns where there may be more than one opportunity. These are depicted on a diagrammatic map base with a symbol indicating the broad type of development and capacity band. They are shown generally at the 'places' and in a way which is not intended to indicate any locational specificity. In the case of the towns, the PGA notations are placed in a general location in relation to a settlement e.g. to the south or north. This is intended to indicate a broad location at those places that will be subject to further investigation.

Table 1: Description of capacity bands

Growth potential will be investigated in greater detail in each place. The scale of development identified for each place is not a target and may be much less and may include more than one possible location.

Broad capacity band	Explanation
Up to 500 dwellings	Places attributed this broad capacity are anticipated to have some opportunity for development subject to further testing. This may be at any scale up to 500 and could be distributed across various sites or as an individual site. 500 dwellings is not a target and the capacity could be significantly less.
500-1500 dwellings	Places attributed this broad capacity are anticipated to have some opportunity for development subject to further testing, including larger site potential. This may be at any scale within the range and could be distributed across various sites or as an individual site.
1500-3000 dwellings	Places attributed this broad capacity are anticipated to have some opportunity for development including potential large-scale development for houses and jobs, subject to further testing, including larger site potential. This may be at any scale within the range and could be distributed across various sites or as an individual site.
3000-5000 dwellings	Places attributed this broad capacity are anticipated to have opportunity for larger-scale development for houses and jobs subject to further testing, including larger site potential. This may be at any scale within the range and could be distributed across various sites or as an individual site.
5000+ dwellings	Places attributed this broad capacity are anticipated to have opportunity for large-scale development subject to further testing, including larger site potential. This may be at any scale within the range and could be distributed across various sites or as an individual site.

Approach to distribution of employment growth

The four approaches set out in the Choices consultation indicate broad assumptions for the distribution of new employment development. These are categorised into the following:

1. Employment growth through mixed use brownfield development within the town centres and urban areas,
2. Employment growth in large-scale standalone locations such as with good connectivity to the strategic road network, and
3. Employment growth at the larger PGAs to indicate the potential for large-scale, mixed use development.

This approach sees employment as an integral element of a sustainable growth strategy alongside residential. This can allow the interrelationships of these two uses be considered such as travel to work.

Work is underway through the West of England Employment Land and Spatial Needs Assessment to investigate the overall scale of employment change the plan needs to cater for, taking into account the impacts of Covid-19 and structural changes in the economy. This evidence will also provide an overarching employment evidence base and an indication of the likely future changes.

Once this evidence is concluded, it will inform thinking on specific employment land and site requirements and appropriate sites will be considered in line with the chosen spatial strategy.

2e: Articulating the approaches

Each of the four approaches is considered broadly capable of meeting the current required dwelling provision. Table 2 identifies the places and assumed capacity for each of the four approaches.

Table 2: Broad capacities for places in each approach

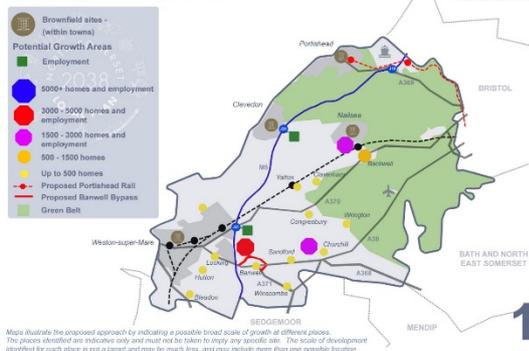
	Retain Green Belt	Urban Focus	Transport Corridors	Greater Dispersal
Large scale employment		Airport Port	Airport Port	Airport Port
Up to 500 houses	Weston-super-Mare Banwell Claverham Churchill Congresbury Sandford Winscombe Wrington Yatton Locking Hutton Bleadon	Weston-super-Mare	Portishead Flax Bourton Yatton Abbots Leigh	Weston-super-Mare Portishead Nailsea Backwell Banwell Claverham Churchill Congresbury Dundry Easton-in-Gordano Flax Bourton Long Ashton Sandford Winscombe Wrington Yatton Abbots Leigh Failand Portbury Tickenham Locking Hutton Bleadon
500-1500 houses	Backwell	Portishead	Backwell Easton-in-Gordano Long Ashton	North of Churchill
Large scale mixed use 1500-3000 houses	Nailsea North of Churchill	East of Weston-super-Mare	Nailsea East of WsM	East of Weston-super-Mare South West Bristol
Large scale mixed use 3000-5000 houses	East of Weston-super-Mare	Nailsea	South West Bristol	
Large scale mixed use 5000+ houses		South West Bristol		

The four approaches are presented using a diagrammatic base to provide a clear illustration of the strategic distribution of growth without at this stage relating to specific sites. Symbols are used to reflect, at a high level, different types and scales of growth:

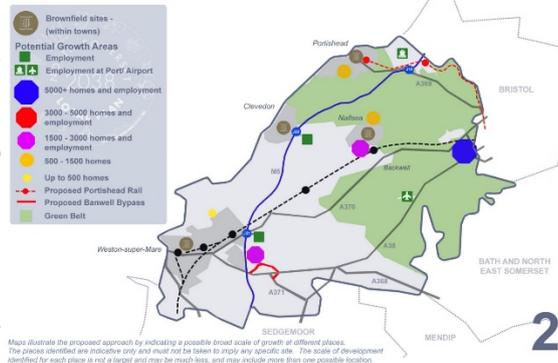
- Brownfield: Representing the urban renewal/brownfield element at each of the four towns. This will deliver mixed use and is common to all approaches.

- Employment: Broad location for new large-scale employment opportunities.
- Mixed use: Large-scale mixed-use development (three capacity bands).
- Housing: Smaller scale housing opportunities (two capacity bands).

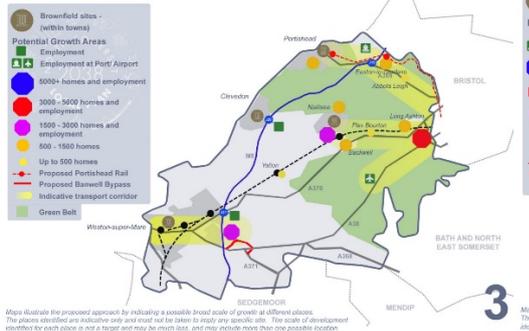
1: RETAIN GREEN BELT



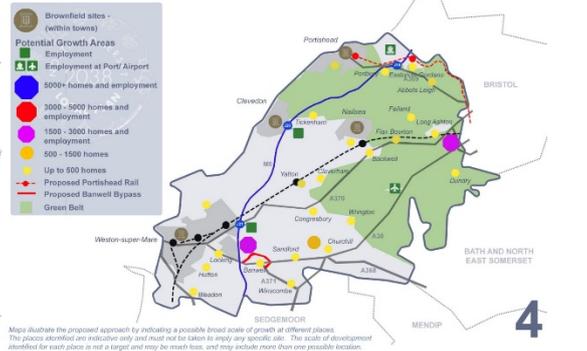
2: URBAN FOCUS



3: TRANSPORT CORRIDORS



4: GREATER DISPERSAL



The plans also indicate the location of existing proposed key transport schemes anticipated to be delivered during the plan period – Metrowest (Portishead rail) and the Banwell Bypass. Further infrastructure schemes will be identified aligned to the emerging proposals for growth.

3. Initial Sustainability Appraisal of the approaches and other testing

Each of the approaches set out in the Choices consultation has been subject to an initial assessment through the interim Sustainability Appraisal published as background material to the Choices consultation. This has provided a high-level assessment of the comparative sustainability merits of each approach.

Additional evidence and assessment will be required on the approaches to inform the selection of the preferred spatial strategy, in addition to feedback to the Choices consultation. This will include transport assessment, further consideration of land availability and suitability, and other assessments.

4. Future steps

The Choices consultation is intended to stimulate debate on the suggested approaches, the potential places within each and broad scales of growth. The Choices consultation also invites comment on whether there are any alternative strategies for growth that should be explored.

This consultation will help to inform the selection of a preferred spatial strategy, informed by other evidence including the plan's strategic priorities, Sustainability Appraisal, transport assessment, infrastructure considerations, consideration of constraints, and delivery issues.

Land availability is currently under review through the SHLAA and this will include further site identification and assessment. Once a preferred spatial strategy is identified, this will provide the context for further, more detailed assessment of growth opportunities at those locations that are appropriate for the chosen spatial strategy. This will provide more detailed evidence of development sites, capacities, constraints, and delivery implications helping to inform the next stage of the local plan.