

retain a concentration of uses which are accessible by a variety of means and which can act as a focus for activity.

Weston retail parks have evolved over the years into an outer commercial area which provides a considerably large retail offer, principally due to a lack of large units within the town centre area. They are not identified as district centres and further expansion of uses which could be located in the town centre will be resisted in order to maintain the role and identity of the town centre as a focus for activity.

New centres may need to be identified in association with major development areas and this will be progressed as more detailed work is undertaken and the needs are established. These centres will need to be appropriate in scale and function to the community they serve.

Locational Policy LP8: Extent of the Green Belt

The boundaries of the North Somerset Green Belt are defined on the Policies Map. The following changes to the existing Green Belt are proposed:

1. A change to the inner Green Belt boundary at Yanley Lane (Woodspring golf course) to accommodate new strategic development.

2. Land to the east of Backwell will be released for mixed use development.
3. Land to the south of Portishead will be released for residential development.
4. A new area of Green Belt is proposed south of Nailsea, and west of Backwell to maintain the separation of the settlements and protect the countryside in this area from encroachment.
5. The following villages within the Green Belt will be inset from the Green Belt.
 - Abbots Leigh
 - Clapton-in-Gordano
 - Cleeve
 - Dundry
 - Failand
 - Flax Bourton
 - Felton
 - Leigh Woods
 - Portbury
 - Redhill
 - Tickenham
 - Weston-in-Gordano
 - Winford

Justification

The North Somerset Green Belt is highly valued by local residents and is an effective planning tool in

preventing the urban sprawl of Bristol and shaping the pattern of development in North Somerset. It keeps land permanently open, prevents towns and villages merging together and protects the countryside.

Changes to the boundary at Yanley Lane (Woodspring golf course), Backwell and Portishead are a result of exceptional circumstances resulting from the need to accommodate the housing requirement. A sequential approach to meeting this requirement has been adopted with sustainable locations outside the Green Belt preferable to Green Belt release and the amount of development allocated in the Green Belt kept to the minimum.

The most significant release of Green Belt is at Yanley Lane (Woodspring golf course). A Green Belt review examined the broad location on this side of Bristol to determine how well specific parcels of land met the purposes of the Green Belt. This highlighted the importance of the Green Belt north of the railway between Long Ashton and Bristol. This Green Belt will be retained. Land to the south, whilst still important in Green Belt terms, has significant sustainability benefits linking it with the wider employment opportunities and services in the Bristol urban area. The precise Green Belt boundary will be determined as the masterplanning for the area proceeds.

The releases at Portishead and Backwell are smaller scale. All sites perform Green Belt purposes although at Portishead less so than parcels to the east of the



town. The spatial strategy steers development to locations well-related to the towns given access to facilities, jobs and public transport opportunities.

Backwell is well related to Nailsea and is also one of the most sustainable villages. It also has a railway station. East of Backwell is a relatively good location in road transport terms being on the Bristol side of the Backwell crossroads. It also has the potential to help deliver improved highway access to Nailsea.

A new area of Green Belt is proposed south of the proposed allocation at Youngwood Lane, Nailsea, and west of the proposed allocation at Grove Farm, Backwell. The exceptional circumstance for making this new Green Belt is a result of the changed Local Plan circumstances of locating two significant new allocations in close physical proximity. Further development in this vicinity could threaten the separation of Nailsea and Backwell and result in further encroachment into the countryside. An extension of the Green Belt in this area, bounded by Chelvey Road, would also provide the opportunity to enhance the area through compensatory improvements to the Green Belt for the benefit of wildlife, the environment and enjoyment of residents.

Villages have been assessed to determine whether changes need to be made regarding whether a settlement is excluded or washed over by the Green Belt. This is based on the openness of the village and 'the important contribution which the open character

of the village makes to the openness of the Green Belt' (NPPF paragraph 144).

A joint Green Belt and settlement boundary will define the extent of these villages. Adjustments will be made to existing settlement boundaries, where applicable, to correct inconsistencies and anomalies and ensure the robustness of the boundary. Boundaries at villages are not being adjusted to include new green field development sites, this is incompatible with the spatial strategy. Development inside boundaries will be permitted in accordance with the other policies in this plan.

Policy LP9: Strategic gaps

Strategic gaps are defined to help retain the separate identity, character and/or landscape setting of settlements.

Strategic gaps are identified on the Policies Map between:

- Weston super Mare and Hutton.
- Weston super Mare and Locking.
- Yatton and Congresbury.
- Banwell and Wolverhill (north of Banwell).

Development within strategic gaps as shown will only be permitted where:

- The open or undeveloped character of the gap would not be significantly adversely affected;
- The separate identity and character of the settlements would not be harmed; and
- The landscape setting of the settlements would not be harmed.

The likely impact of the proposal in conjunction with any other developments with extant planning consent must be taken into account.

Justification

Gaps between settlements can play an important role in maintaining the local character and distinctiveness of the settlements, and the sense that they are separate places. Identification and protection of strategic gaps will help to prevent their erosion by incremental development which would be detrimental to the settlements' separate identities, character and/or landscape setting. Protection is particularly important where such erosion could potentially cause coalescence of the settlements.

Reliance on countryside policies alone would be unlikely to provide sufficient protection against the reduction or loss of such important gaps to development, particularly in the long term. While such policies provide some control of development in the countryside, they often allow for exceptions, and there is also the risk of development being allowed

