

## The Role of the Local Plan

**1.01** The Sedgemoor District Local Plan is an important document that includes policies and proposals for development and other use of land, measures for the improvement of the natural and built environment and the management of transport. It identifies land for development. It also provides a framework within which other development proposals will be considered. It is also the basis for co-ordinating this development with the provision of essential infrastructure and services. The Plan covers the period 1991 - 2011.

## Why is a Local Plan Needed?

**1.02** There are already four area Local Plans for Sedgemoor:

- the Bridgwater Area Local Plan;
- the Burnham-on-Sea Area Local Plan;
- the Cheddar Area Local Plan; and
- the Mendip Hills Local Plan.

A new Plan is needed because these Plans are becoming increasingly out of date, a new Structure Plan has been prepared, and there is a great deal of new government guidance. The Council is required to have a single Plan for the whole of Sedgemoor.

## What has Influenced the Local Plan?

**1.03** The Local Plan has been significantly influenced by the Somerset Structure Plan. This has provided the strategic planning framework for the County which includes the housing and employment provision for Sedgemoor. The new structure Plan has been prepared for the same period as this Local Plan, 1991 - 2011.

**1.04** Government guidance in the form of Planning Policy Guidance Notes, Circulars, White and Green Papers, Good Practice Guides and Ministerial Statements are also an important influence on the Local Plan.

**1.05** The other important influence is the views of people who will be affected by the Local Plan. How the Council have sought to involve people in the Local Plan process and how they will be involved from here on, is set out below.

## Stages in Local Plan Preparation

**1.06** The brief for the Local Plan was published in May 1995. The Sedgemoor District Local Plan Major Planning and Environmental Issues document was published for public consultation between March and May 1998. This set out the issues and approaches that the Plan had to deal with. It did not identify particular sites for development.

**1.07** Between the consultation on the Issues document and the Deposit Draft going on deposit, the Council raised awareness of the Local Plan process and involved people in the writing of the Local Plan. It embarked on a communication strategy and published a Local Plan Newsletter. A series of "Open Days" were held between September and October 1998 when people were asked to identify their priorities in locating new development (in terms of locations, sites and issues), addressing transport issues and conserving the built and natural environment.

**1.08** The strategy, policies and proposals of the Plan were subject to a "Sustainability Appraisal". The full results are set out in a separate Sustainability Appraisal document that has been subsequently revised in tandem with later stages of the preparation of the Plan.

**1.09** A Revised Deposit Draft version of the Local Plan was published in October 2000 and included changes that the Council proposed to make. Nearly 900 further responses to these revisions were received although over half of them were in support. As a result of objections from the Government Office for the South West and changes to national planning policy guidance, the Council considered it necessary to publish further "Pre-Inquiry" changes. These changes, published on 30th July 2001, related primarily to housing and employment land issues. All unresolved objections to the Deposit Plan, Revised Deposit Plan, and Pre-Inquiry changes were considered at the Local Plan Inquiry that concluded in September 2002.

**1.10** On the 1st of August 2003 the Council received the Inspector's Report of the Local Plan Inquiry. Following the Council's formal consideration of the recommendations of the Inspector, a List of Proposed Modifications and a Statement of Decisions in Response to the Inspector's Report were drawn up and placed on public deposit for a six week period from 26th April 2004 to the 7th June 2004 to allow for representations in support or objection to the modifications document.

# Introduction

## Chapter 1

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**1.11** The Council considered the representations that were received before the Modifications were approved in August 2004. There then followed a four week notice period beginning on 31st August 2004 to provide an opportunity for the Secretary of State to 'call-in' the plan. This four week notice period ended on the 28th September 2004 and the plan was formally adopted on the 29th September 2004.

### **The Control of Development**

**1.12** The Development Plan, which is both the Structure Plan and the Local Plan, is the starting point in considering planning applications for development and changes of use. When deciding a planning application, legislation requires that the decision shall be made in accordance with the Local Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

**1.13** In determining how the Local Plan applies to a particular proposal or area of land, it needs to be read as a whole.

**1.14** Somerset County Council have produced a Minerals Local Plan and are currently preparing a Waste Local Plan. These Local Plans also form part of the Development Plan and need to be considered in determining planning applications.

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance**

**1.16** The Local Plan does not include all planning guidance that is needed. The Plan identifies the need for supplementary guidance, both site specific and topic related. Both will develop the policies and proposals of the Plan. Where new guidance is prepared it will be subject to public consultation.