The Revised Sedgemoor District Local Plan is published in two parts:

Part 1 - The Written Statement and Inset Maps and
Part 2 - The Proposals Map.

The Adopted Sedgemoor District Local Plan was adopted on the 29th September 2004.
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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A new Plan is needed because these Plans are becoming increasingly out of date, a new Structure Plan has been prepared, and there is a great deal of new government guidance.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.
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.
Introduction

2.01 The Local Plan is based on a clear purpose and a series of aims. These bring together the strategy of government guidance and the Structure Plan with the Council’s own priorities. In each topic area there are key objectives, adding specific guidance for each topic of the Local Plan.

2.02 The Council is committed to keeping under review the matters which may be expected to affect the development or planning of Sedgemoor. It is important to know whether the Purpose and Aims of the Plan are being achieved together with the Key Objectives of each topic area. This will be addressed in the development and extension of the Plan’s Sustainability Appraisal.

Statement of Purpose

The Sedgemoor District Local Plan will:

- safeguard the valued characteristics of the area, including its natural, built and archaeological heritage, while promoting sustainable quality development, which meets local needs and which supports local businesses and enterprise;
- promote the preservation and enhancement of the District’s unique character to reinforce its sense of identity and place. It will encourage diversity by promoting an appropriate mix of high quality development, services and facilities aimed at helping local communities thrive and prosper;
- encourage inward investment and tourism through supporting existing local enterprises and the establishment of new desirable ventures, which are sensitive to distinctive, local characteristics; and
- have regard to the desirability of reducing the consumption of non-renewable natural resource, reducing pollution and protecting key natural assets so that the needs and expectations of younger and future generations are safeguarded.

Aims of the Local Plan

Necessary development

- Meeting the community’s present and predicted needs for housing, employment, transport, shopping, recreation, leisure, social and community facilities.

Sustainable development

- Conserving natural environmental resources and minimising waste and pollution while promoting levels, locations and forms of development designed to avoid adverse environmental impacts. This is to ensure that where development is necessary, it will contribute towards improving the quality of life of present and future generations who live, work and visit the District.

Quality development

- Where new development is both necessary and sustainable, it will also protect and enhance Sedgemoor's distinctive environmental characteristics. The Council will expect high standards in architecture, building design, and in urban and landscape design (including transportation infrastructure), to ensure that new development responds to its local context and creates a sense of identity and place.

Monitoring and Review

- Local Planning Authorities are required to keep under review the matters which may be expected to affect the development of their area. The Council will continue to monitor economic, social and environmental factors and trends affecting the District, to inform future review of the local plan. In addition the Council will monitor changes that occur in local, regional and national policy that may indicate the need for aspects of the Plan to be reviewed and updated.

- The Plan needs to be responsive to such change, ensuring that it continues to contribute to the aims and objectives set by the Council for the benefit of the local community. Monitoring the effectiveness of the Plan’s policies and proposals will enable informed decisions to be made about how policies should be changed and improved in the future. This approach is consistent with the ‘Plan, Monitor and Manage’ approach advocated by government in national planning guidance.
Introduction

3.01 Fundamental to the strategy of the Local Plan is the overall development strategy; how and where new development is accommodated in Sedgemoor. Government guidance and the Structure Plan give important direction.

3.02 The aim of the Structure Plan’s strategy consistent with government guidance is to conserve the environment of the County and achieve broader sustainability objectives, such as reducing the need to travel, by focusing development on the larger settlements. In addition, in terms of the distribution of development, the strategy aims to achieve a close relationship between areas of economic expansion and the allocation of housing.

3.03 The Structure Plan states that new development should be focussed on the towns, where provision for such development should be made in accordance with their role and function, individual characteristics and constraints.

Key Objective

To deliver a focussed approach to locating new development, which:

- concentrates new development in the Towns;
- maximises the use of brownfield land and existing buildings and minimises the use of greenfield sites;
- creates opportunities to use and develop sustainable forms of transport, particularly walking, cycling and public transport;
- does not cause material harm to the environmental characteristics of those Towns;
- does not overload the capacity of the facilities and services of those Towns; and
- does not prejudice the vitality of other settlements and rural areas to provide for a range of development opportunities to meet the defined needs of those who live and work there.

3.04 Government guidance and the Structure Plan states that priority should be given to the re-use of previously developed land. The Government is committed to increasing the proportion of development achieved on previously developed land. Government guidance and the Structure Plan give emphasis to the encouragement of appropriate mixed-use development.

Towns

3.05 The Structure Plan identifies Bridgwater and Burnham-on-Sea/Highbridge as towns.

3.06 These two towns will function as locations for residential use, employment and shopping, cultural, community and education services within Sedgemoor. They are the settlements with the most accessibility by means other than the car and the most facilities.

3.07 Bridgwater is the County’s third largest Town, which in terms of population is twice the size of Burnham-on-Sea/Highbridge. It offers the best facilities, the most employment and the greatest accessibility by public transport.

3.08 The Town of Burnham-on-Sea/Highbridge is an important centre for housing, transport, shopping, employment and tourism. After Bridgwater it is the settlement with the greatest access to services, jobs and public transport.

3.09 The Structure Plan does not distinguish between Bridgwater and Burnham-on-Sea/Highbridge in terms of appropriate locations for development.

3.10 Given the relative accessibility to jobs, services and public transport, it is appropriate that Bridgwater is the principal focus of development over the period 1991–2011.

Rural Centres and Villages

3.11 In addition to towns, the Structure Plan defines two further categories of settlements: Rural Centres and Villages. Rural Centres act as focal points for local employment and shopping, social and community activity in their areas. Villages provide limited local services. The Structure Plan does not identify which settlements are Rural Centres or Villages, and these are to be defined in the Local Plan. They have been defined after carefully considering facilities and accessibility.
Figure 3.1
SETTLEMENT CATEGORIES IN SEDGEMOOR

Key

- ■ Towns
- ▲ Rural Centres
- ● Villages
- ——— Railway
- ——— Significant Roads

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3.12 The Structure Plan states that development in Rural Centres and Villages should be such as will sustain and enhance their role and be commensurate with their size and accessibility, and appropriate to their character and physical identity. There is no distinction drawn between Rural Centres and Villages in terms of the scale or type of development appropriate, so long as it is compatible with the size and scale of the settlement.

3.13 In so far as development is required in addition to that which can be accommodated at the Towns, development will be focussed at Rural Centres or Villages which have the greatest range of facilities and are the most accessible by means other than the car.

3.14 Whilst a settlement may be appropriate for development in terms of facilities and accessibility, an acceptable site may not be possible in terms of the character of the settlement, its surrounding countryside and other material considerations.

POLICY STR1
Cheddar, Nether Stowey, North Petherton and Wedmore are defined as Rural Centres.

Ashcott, Axbridge, Badgworth, Bawdrip, Berrow, Biddisham Blackford, Brean, Brent Knoll, Burtle, Cannington, Catcott, Chapel Allerton, Chedzoy, Chilton Polden, Chilton Trinity, Comwicb, Cosssington, Cross, East Brent, East Huntspill, East Lyng, Edington, Fiddington, Goathurst, Lymphas, Mark, Mark Causeway, Middlezoy, Moorland, Moorlinch, North Newton, Othery, Pawlett, Puriton, Rooksbridge, Shipwick, Shipham, Spaxton/Four Forks, Stawell, Stockland Bristol, Stone Allerton, Theale, Thurlington, Weare, Wembdon, West Huntspill, Westonzoyland and Woolavington are defined as Villages.

3.15 Rural Centres because of the range of facilities they offer and their location serve as centres for their surrounding rural areas. Cheddar has a good range of facilities and is a local employment centre. North Petherton has a good range of services. Nether Stowey and Wedmore are both smaller with less facilities, but because they are in relatively inaccessible parts of the district they are important local centres.

3.16 The character of the settlements classified as Villages varies significantly. They include the historic town of Axbridge. Some have a range of basic facilities as good as the more isolated Rural Centres. The majority have very modest facilities, poor accessibility by public transport and limited employment.

3.17 Of all the Rural Centres and Villages, Cheddar offers the best opportunity to reduce the need to travel and therefore meet the objectives of the Local Plan. It is the largest settlement after Bridgewater and Burnham-on-Sea/Highbridge. More significantly, it has the best range of local services and facilities and the best balance of jobs to people.

3.18 In other settlements small-scale development, which can be accommodated within established settlement boundaries consistent with general settlement policies, will be appropriate to sustain and enhance their role. In addition there may be justification for local needs housing and small-scale employment development.

POLICY STR2
Development in Rural Centres and Villages should be such as will sustain and enhance their role and will be commensurate with their size and accessibility, and appropriate to their character and physical identity.

Outside Settlements

3.19 Outside the defined boundaries of settlements, i.e. Towns, Villages and Rural Centres, government policy and the Structure Plan state that development shall be strictly controlled. The general tenor of national countryside policy is that development should benefit the economy and maintain or enhance the environment. Agricultural and forestry developments will generally be appropriate in the countryside along with certain other developments, such as conversion of rural buildings for employment use and some affordable housing schemes. These and other exceptions to the normal strict control are set out in specific policies.

3.20 The development boundaries of settlements (ie. Towns, Rural Centres and Villages) defined in this Plan are shown on the Proposals Map. Within them, development may be permissible subject to the policies in the Plan. Outside them, countryside policies will generally apply. These development boundaries are policy boundaries, not physical boundaries, although in many places they follow clearly defined property boundaries or other physical features on the ground.
POLICY STR3
The countryside will be protected for its own sake. Outside defined development boundaries, new housebuilding and other new development will be strictly controlled. Development will not be permitted unless it accords with other policies in this Plan which provide, exceptionally, for development in the countryside. In general, all such development will benefit economic activity, will maintain or enhance the environment, and will not increase the need to travel.

Brownfield Strategy

3.21 The Government is committed to increasing the proportion of development on previously developed sites or otherwise underused land within urban areas, so called brownfield sites. This should directly contribute to:

a) regenerating urban areas;

b) clearing up and re-using derelict, disused and underused sites;

c) avoiding unnecessary loss of the countryside;

d) reducing the need to travel; and

e) countering long-standing trends of decentralisation.

3.22 Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing (2000) (PPG3) defines previously developed land as that which is or was occupied by a permanent structure (excluding agricultural or forestry buildings), and associated fixed surface infrastructure. For the purposes of this Plan, brownfield development is defined in the same way. This is subject to:

a) restricting the development or re-use of sites beyond the defined boundaries of Towns, Rural Centres and Villages other than that for which a countryside location is essential;

b) protecting open space, playing fields and green spaces within Towns, Rural Centres and Villages.

3.23 The Council aims to maximise the amount of development on previously developed land in Towns, Rural Centres and Villages. Brownfield sites in the countryside, outside Towns, Rural Centres and Villages, offer the opportunity for development without the loss of previously undeveloped land. However, this must be balanced with other environmental impacts, including traffic generation and increased car dependency. These sites are unlikely to be appropriate for development other than for which a countryside location is essential. The re-use of existing buildings can make an important contribution to minimising the need for new development and maximising the use of existing resources. This includes the re-use of buildings in the countryside. It is very important not to lose important areas of open land within urban areas. They are important to the character of towns and villages and the well-being of residents.

3.24 Bridgwater because of its changing employment profile and changes in the role of the Town Centre, has had and continues to have significant redevelopment opportunities. A large number of brownfield sites have already come forward for development.

3.25 Highbridge has significant potential for the re-use of previously developed land. As with Bridgwater, this has the potential to aid the regeneration of run down areas, particularly the Town Centre.

3.26 The Council has undertaken a detailed assessment of brownfield capacity at Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge. It provides the basis for the brownfield sites identified for development in this Plan.

3.27 The importance of realism in the assessment of brownfield development potential is recognised. There are a number of reasons why brownfield sites may be difficult to bring forward including divided ownership and site preparation costs, which may include contamination issues.

3.28 Progress in the achievement of brownfield development is to be monitored, so that the achievement of the Plan target for the development of housing on previously developed sites or conversions can be assessed. Consistent under-achievement of that figure over several years would threaten overall housing provision.

3.29 The Council will phase the provision of development on greenfield sites, which might otherwise be developed too quickly. The Council will also resist additional greenfield sites when brownfield sites remain undeveloped. If greenfield...
sites are permitted in addition to that which the Plan allocates, this is likely to reduce the achievement of brownfield sites and re-use. The development of brownfield sites and re-use is likely to be more expensive and/or more complicated than greenfield sites.

Sequential Strategy for Locating Development

3.30 To achieve the objectives of the Local Plan consistently with the Structure Plan strategy, the Plan has a “sequential” approach to accommodating new development. This combines the priority for the re-use of previously developed sites and the importance of focusing development on the settlements with the most facilities and the greatest public transport accessibility:

3.31 All allocated housing sites in the Plan have been chosen by reference to the following criteria from para. 31 of PPG 3 Housing (2000):

- the availability of previously developed sites; location and accessibility;
- the capacity of existing and potential infrastructure;
- the ability to build communities;
- and any physical and environmental constraints on development.

POLICY STR4
The overall policy on development distribution for the period 1991-2011 is to identify land and sites on the basis of the following priorities:

1 Firstly on brownfield land or sites which offer the opportunity for redevelopment or re-use, the development of which would contribute towards regeneration, viability and vitality, and which are within or close to existing or proposed public transport corridors in this order:

a) within Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge
b) within Rural Centres and Villages;
c) in the countryside, re-using existing buildings, or for development where a countryside location is essential.

2 Secondly on greenfield sites, only if it is demonstrated that sufficient brownfield sites or re-use opportunities are unavailable. It shall be in this order:

a) at Bridgwater;
b) at Burnham-on-Sea/Highbridge;
c) at Cheddar; and
d) at Rural Centres and Villages which have the greatest range of facilities and are the most accessible by means other than the car.

Mixed-Use Development

3.32 Government policy emphasises the importance attached to promoting mixed-use development. Mixed-use development can occur at many different levels: within a settlement as a whole; within groups of streets; on a site; and within individual buildings. The interpretation of mixed-uses is a matter for the local context.

3.33 Benefits arise from the potential increase in activity throughout the day from a range of uses compared to a single use, and from the reduction in the need to travel for a range of facilities. Problems can arise by the introduction of incompatible activities, or poorly considered overall design. In assessing brownfield sites, conversion opportunities and greenfield sites the Council will encourage the bringing together of complementary and compatible uses.

POLICY STR6
Proposals resulting in mixed-use development will be encouraged provided that only uses which would be compatible with each other and the surrounding area are included and the scheme is designed as a united whole. Proposals for mixed-use schemes will be particularly encouraged in Town Centres and in other areas which are highly accessible by means of transport other than the private car.

Planning Obligations

3.34 Planning obligations are an important tool which allows developments to overcome otherwise decisive obstacles. There is government guidance on what can reasonably be secured (Circular 1/97). The Council will seek planning
obligations to secure benefits directly related to the proposed development, reasonably related to it in scale and kind and necessary for it to proceed. The Plan sets out in the detailed proposals for development on brownfield and greenfield sites and in topic specific policies, matters on which planning obligations will be sought.
Introduction

4.01 Housing development is a major land user and contributes significantly to the quality of life and the built environment. In recent times, there has been a rapid expansion of housing development. However, the recession of the late 1980's and early 1990's, has changed many people's perception of housing as a primary financial investment. This has been coupled with a change in the structure of housing supply, with more significant roles being played by Housing Associations together with public and private partnerships.

4.02 Unfortunately, new housing development is often characterised by indistinctive, standardised volume building on greenfield sites adjoining towns and villages. In consequence, there has been increasing concern as to the quality of new housing and how this contributes to the overall quality of the environment.

4.03 The commitment to sustainability as part of quality development promotes the debate as to the nature of housing provision, with respect to locally distinctive characteristics of built form and layout. Particular concerns relate to the impact of cars and parking, the use of renewable and re-cycled building materials, green design, lifetime homes, energy efficiency, safe and secure neighbourhoods, and the role of the community in planning and maintaining residential environments.

4.04 The Council is very aware of the importance of and benefits from ensuring the planning and housing functions of the authority work closely together. There is close liaison in preparing the Housing Strategy Statement and the Local Plan. The Housing Strategy will provide an up to date source of guidance on matters such as the District Council’s housing priorities including housing, need, mix and affordability.

Key Objective

To accommodate a level and type of housing to meet identified and predicted local need, including the needs of those who cannot afford access into general market housing together with those who have other special requirements, on sites which accord with development strategy and which contribute towards creating a quality built environment for all.

Housing Land Requirements

4.05 Somerset County Council adopted the revised Structure Plan in March 2000. The Structure Plan has been adopted with a housing provision for Sedgemoor of 9,200 dwellings for the period 1991 - 2011.

4.06 A considerable volume of housing in the District has already been constructed or is committed. Figure 4.1 sets out the remaining housing requirement until the year 2011, under the adopted Structure Plan requirement.

4.07 The outstanding requirement for housing to be provided in the remaining Plan period to 2011 is 3888 at April 2003 or 486 units each year. This is slightly more than the annual rate over the last 10 years.

POLICY H60

Within the plan period 1991-2011 an additional 9,200 dwellings are proposed, an average of 460 dwellings per year. In accordance with the sequential approach to development a target of 44% for brownfield housing supply is adopted. On the basis of completions to date the rate of development for the remaining plan period is 486 dwellings per year from the sources identified in Figure 4.1.

Phasing and Monitoring of Housing Development

4.08 Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 Housing (PPG3) sets out to direct the delivery of housing through the Planning System on the basis of ‘Plan, monitor and manage’. The approach now required places priority on the use of previously developed (brownfield) land and buildings and creates an expectation that, where greenfield land is to be developed to meet housing needs, it is carefully managed. Greenfield sites are a limited resource and best use should be made of them, but it is also recognised that an over supply of greenfield sites will reduce the impetus to develop brownfield sites.

4.09 PPG3 also states that local authorities ‘should manage the release of sites over the plan period in order to control the pattern and speed of urban growth, ensure that the new infrastructure is co-ordinated with new housing development and deliver the local authority’s recycling target’ of brownfield land. In guidance on good practice the Government suggest ways in which this
might be achieved through Local Plans. These are:

- site released based on identified criteria;
- ranking of sites for development; and
- releasing sites over defined periods within a plan–phasing.

4.10 Given the circumstances in Sedgemoor featuring a relatively small number of large sites, phasing is considered to be the most suitable way forward. Phasing allows the Local Plan to map out the achievement of housing from the various sources identified. It also clarifies when sites should be prepared for development and takes into account the lead in times for infrastructure provision. Through monitoring it is also possible to follow progress and vary the phasing in the Plan if circumstances change.

4.11 The Housing Capacity Study has shown a greater potential supply of housing from brownfield sites than originally envisaged. Some of these are significant new prospects and all will make a positive contribution to regeneration in Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge. It is important to promote their development and this priority for brownfield development is recognised in the Adopted Plan policy STR4.

4.12 Despite the increased brownfield potential, greenfield housing development remains part of the strategy in order to meet housing needs. There are a range of issues affecting the allocated site and the appropriateness for development at any given time. A phased approach envisages a clear order for development which fully accounts for the contribution of non-greenfield housing sources, recognised existing consents, their anticipated delivery, considers the likely timing of any infrastructure related to the sites and follows the priority for site selection in the Plan.

4.13 The Council recognises that large sites such as the proposed South Bridgwater site require long lead times in order to provide necessary infrastructure. It is therefore considered appropriate to allocate it and to phase it in accordance with Policy H61 and Figure 4.2. This envisages completions on the site in 2006. This site is critical to delivering the Local Plan Strategy and it is therefore appropriate to identify it as a “Strategic Site” in accordance with national guidance. As such it is appropriate to identify development beyond 2011 in order to provide the certainty required for bringing forward the necessary comprehensive package of infrastructure improvements. For these reasons such strategic sites are not expected to be affected by future changes to phasing that may result from on-going monitoring.

4.14 Two phases are suggested 2000 – 2005 and 2005 – 2011. These are detailed in Figure 4.2. Progress will be monitored against the phasing and changes made if circumstances fail to deliver sites as anticipated. Policy H62 sets out the framework for monitoring progress toward meeting the housing requirement.

4.15 The second phase is clearly more difficult to determine absolutely. Review of the Structure Plan may have significant impact on planning for housing in the longer term and will influence review of the Local Plan and hence the content of Phase II. However, the content of Phase I is very clear and the delivery of the sites can be treated with a high level of certainty.

Residential Land Availability

**POLICY H61**

A phased approach to housing development is proposed in order to give priority to the development of brownfield sites and to maintain a sufficient supply of housing land throughout the plan period. Housing site proposals H4 to H21 and H46 to H59 are included in the phasing programme as set out in Figure 4.2. Two phases are proposed, 2000-2005 and 2005-2011. Development will be permitted in order to achieve the general sequence of development set out in Figure 4.2 and the annual rate of supply proposed in Policy H60.

**POLICY H62**

To ensure an adequate supply of housing, completions will be monitored on an annual basis including the provision of affordable housing. Progress on bringing forward significant sites (over 10 units) will also be monitored. Where such monitoring reveals that sites are coming forward at a different rate to that anticipated in Policy H61 and Figure 4.2 adjustments will be made to the phasing strategy through the publication of Supplementary Planning Guidance. Such adjustments will have regard to the following considerations:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sedgemoor District</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure Plan Provision Housing requirement 1991 - 2011</td>
<td>9,200</td>
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<td>Completions</td>
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<td>Land with planning permission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land under construction</td>
<td>570</td>
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<td><strong>Total Commitments</strong></td>
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<td>Residual housing requirement to 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possible brownfield sites (1)</td>
<td>1,102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible additional capacity resources (1)</td>
<td>208</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approximate rural windfall</td>
<td>210</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sub total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,520</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Remaining requirement</td>
<td>646</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-implementation allowance (2)</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approximate greenfield requirement</strong></td>
<td><strong>913</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

1. Brownfield figure is based on the Sedgemoor Urban Capacity Study. It includes the brownfield sites in the Plan.

2. The non-implementation allowance is based on 10% of existing planning permissions and other commitments/capacity.
The need to achieve sustainable development;
The need to achieve the necessary house building rates;
The performance of windfall development;
The receipt of market intelligence;
Any other material considerations.

Control of Housing Development - Summary of Development Locations

4.16 The overall volume of housing development in the Local Plan will be controlled in accordance with Structure Plan provisions. All housing proposals will be assessed against:

- Structure Plan Policies;
- the provisions of the Local Plan; and
- other material considerations.

Within these provisions, housing development will be restricted to the following locations:

Bridgwater and Burnham-on Sea/Highbridge Urban Areas:

i) on the sites allocated on the Proposals Map (ie brownfield and greenfield sites);

ii) on other appropriate (brownfield) sites within the development boundaries of urban areas, which come forward during the Plan period in accordance with general strategy and other Local Plan provisions; and

iii) conversions of redundant buildings or as part of mixed use schemes.

b) Within the development boundaries of Rural Centres and identified villages, involving suitable infill, small scale development and appropriate conversion of redundant buildings.

c) In the countryside outside the defined development boundaries of Towns, Rural Centres and Villages, housing development will be strictly...
controlled and normally limited to that which successfully demonstrates the need for a countryside location:

i) genuine agricultural or other appropriate local need which cannot reasonably be met in a listed settlement (Town, Rural Centre or Village);

ii) conversions to residential use where the building is appropriate to be retained and could not provide for satisfactory employment, recreation, leisure or other use compatible with a countryside location; and

iii) appropriate development for local needs housing outside, but adjoining, the development boundaries of listed settlements (Towns, Rural Centres and Villages).

Committed Housing Development

4.17 The previous adopted Local Plans for the District provided for a range of sites for housing development. The allocations that had yet to be developed or granted planning permission have been re-assessed and one is included as housing allocation H55. In the case of the strategic housing allocation associated with the Northern Distributor Road, this is included as a policy commitment and is currently under construction.

Supplementary Planning Guidance for Housing Development

4.18 The Local Plan allocates a range of sites for housing development in support and interpretation of the District-wide strategy and also anticipated a significant level of “windfall” housing. The strategy for development is intended to optimise the sustainable aspects of development. There is now an increased need for all development, (and particularly housing) to explicitly address a range of issues as part of this quality agenda. The approach to this is best promoted by the preparation of design and development guidance. The purpose of such guidance is to identify those factors which should inform the approach to development. The level and detail of guidance and consultation will depend on the complexity of issues to be addressed. The essential consideration is that sites should not be released for development until appropriate design and development guidance has been prepared and adopted.

4.19 The purpose of the Policy H1 is to ensure that design objectives and responses are explicitly considered in relation to the site and its wider context. The amount and detail of guidance will vary, dependent on complexity of issues involved (and which may not necessarily be related to the size of the site). The Policy is to operate in association with Policy BE1 which provides a structured design process for addressing sustainability in development at all levels. It is recognised that the preparation of guidance should not unreasonably delay the development process and it is intended that the planning authority adopts a proactive approach and promotes partnership working with developers and landowners. The following notes provide further interpretation to this Policy:

a) allocated greenfield housing sites - the design process will lead to the preparation of a masterplan in association with extensive public consultation;

b) allocated or windfall housing sites of 10 units or more - the design process to lead to the preparation of a design brief, which may be in association with limited public consultation;

c) allocated or windfall housing sites of less that 10 units - a design brief may be required where there are complicated or sensitive issues to be addressed which may be in association with limited public consultation; and

d) masterplans or design briefs may be prepared by the Planning Authority, developers or landowners. The preference would be for a collaborative/partnership approach which it is considered is the best medium with which to address sustainability and quality in development.

POLICY H1
The Council will normally produce Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), in partnership or consultation with landowners, developers and other interested parties, for the following types of development site:

a) allocated greenfield sites;

b) allocated brownfield sites; and
c) significant windfall sites, where circumstances warrant the production of SPG.

SPG may address a wide range of development issues. SPG will be issued separately from the Plan, and will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Brownfield Housing Sites - Overview of Housing Provision in the Local Plan

4.20 In accordance with the Local Plan development strategy (Policy STR4), the first requirement in identifying sufficient sites to meet the housing requirement has been to maximise opportunities for brownfield development. The District Council’s Urban Capacity Study suggested that about 1316 dwellings could be accommodated on brownfield sites with a further 260 dwellings provided from other sources such as subdivision, intensification and living over the shop. This represented 43% of the residual housing requirement as at July 2001. As at April 2003 previously developed land and buildings represented 60% of the residual requirement and 50% of total allocations (Figure 4.1).

4.21 The Council recognises the varying certainties in bringing forward brownfield sites for housing. Only the most realistic sites have therefore been identified which comprise allocations with an estimated capacity of 10 units or more. Sites below 10 units are allowed for in the “windfall” figure.

4.22 At both Bridgwater and Highbridge the strategy for brownfield development will contribute to improving and enhancing the Town Centres by locating housing within easy walking and cycling distance and improving the environment of the surrounding area.

4.23 The detailed development requirements for these brownfield sites within the Towns will generally be a matter to be determined at the planning application stage, in accordance with the policies of the Local Plan. It is important that the development of these sites is accompanied by measures to improve the network of pedestrian and cycle routes and open space provision in accordance with other Local Plan objectives.

Objectives for Residential Development

4.24 For housing sites allocated in the Local Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance will provide objectives for general and specific issues related to the design of the site. For non-allocated (or windfall sites) Policies H2 and H3 below provide general objectives which housing proposals will be required to meet.

POLICY H2
Within the development boundaries of Bridgwater and Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge, residential development will be permitted, provided it meets the following criteria:

a) it would not involve the loss of land of recreational and/or amenity value, or of townscape importance;

b) it would not harm the character or amenity of an adjoining residential area, or be harmed by that area;

c) the site can be satisfactorily accessed, contains sufficient space for circulation; and

d) (subject to Policy E9) it would not lead to the loss of established or allocated employment land.

POLICY H3
Within the development boundary of a Rural Centre or Village, residential development (comprising infilling, conversion, or small scale development or redevelopment) will be permitted, provided it meets the following criteria:

a) it would not involve the loss of, or harm to open spaces which contribute to village character, or land of recreational or amenity value;

b) it would be compatible in scale, density and layout with the size and form of the village;

c) its design (massing, proportions, materials, detailing and landscaping) would be sympathetic with the vernacular character of the village and locality;

d) the site can be satisfactorily accessed, and contains sufficient space for circulation and any required parking;

e) it would not harm the character or amenity of any adjoining residential property; and
f) (subject to Policy E9) it would not lead to the loss of established or allocated employment land.

Land Allocated for Housing Development

4.25 The sites identified for housing development comprise the interpretation of the Local Plan Housing Strategy. They are presented as:

a) Brownfield Housing Development:
   - Bridgwater;
   - Burnham-on-Sea/Highbridge; and other sites.

b) Greenfield Housing Development

4.26 Appendix 4.1 sets out a range of criteria which are relevant to the development of the sites. These criteria cannot be regarded as exhaustive but to comprise the basis of a Design Brief or Masterplan. In certain circumstances, additional development issues will be required to be addressed, particularly relating to transport infrastructure. The dwelling capacity indicated is based on information currently available, the actual number of dwellings may be higher or lower.

Brownfield Housing Development: Bridgwater

The following “brownfield” sites are identified for housing development:

44-50 Friarn Street, Bridgwater

4.27 This site adjoins the Priory housing site. It is situated on the corner of Friarn Street and Silver Street and offers the opportunity for further enhancement to the residential area.

PROPOSAL H4
44-50 Friarn Street, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing.

The Cornmill, Bridgwater Docks

4.28 The Cornmill at Bridgwater Docks is the sole remaining large industrial use within the dockside housing complex adjoining the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal. Development of the site could provide a further exciting contribution to the residential environment of this area.

PROPOSAL H5
The Cornmill, Bridgwater Docks, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing.

42-44 St John’s Street and adjoining land, Bridgwater

4.29 Redevelopment of a former light industrial site provides an opportunity to reinforce the residential function of this area with attractive terraced housing.

PROPOSAL H6
42-44 St John’s Street and land adjoining, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing.

Land on east side of Taunton Road, Bridgwater

4.30 Development of this site will reinforce the gateway to Bridgwater and add a range of accommodation.

PROPOSAL H7
Land on east side of Taunton Road, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing.

Mount Street, (SWEB Depot), Bridgwater

4.31 Subject to the relocation of the operations on this site, this location provides an excellent opportunity to provide a range of higher density town centre housing. Mount Street is very varied in character and the required Design Brief will be a challenge to address a satisfactory design response.

PROPOSAL H8
Mount Street (SWEB Depot) Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing.

Land at Horsepond, Bridgwater

4.32 This site, with good pedestrian links to the town centre, will provide for high density housing in an historic part of the town.

PROPOSAL H9
Land at Horsepond, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing.
**Housing**

**Chapter 4**

**Monmouth Trading Estate, Bridgwater**

4.33 The existing buildings and site to the immediate west of Monmouth Street will provide for new build and conversion for housing with good pedestrian links to the Town Centre and St John Street facilities.

**PROPOSAL H11**

Monmouth Trading Estate, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing.

**Land east of Colley Lane, Bridgwater**

4.34 This site comprises part of the surplus car park to the existing industrial operation.

**PROPOSAL H12**

Land east of Colley Lane, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing.

**Land to rear of 87-97 Bath Road, Bridgwater**

4.35 This small site will contribute to the residential function of this location.

**PROPOSAL H14**

Land to rear of 87-97 Bath Road, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing.

**Land east of Bristol Road, Bridgwater**

4.36 This site, to the south of the playing fields and west of the Cattle Market is a significant site within the urban area to contribute to housing requirements.

**PROPOSAL H15**

Land east of Bristol Road, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing.

**Land at Old Taunton Road Industrial Estate, Bridgwater**

4.37 This site is well located in terms of accessibility to the Town Centre. Access for maintenance will need to be retained to the existing flood defence structure to the River Parrett and to Hamp Brook.

**PROPOSAL H47**

Land at Old Taunton Road Industrial Estate, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing.

**MOT Garage, All Saints Terrace, Bridgwater**

4.38 Development of this site will complement the residential development proposed on the adjoining site to the south (Proposal H12). Access and transportation requirements will be subject of a traffic assessment. A Contaminated Land Assessment will be required before development commences.

**PROPOSAL H49**

MOT Garage, All Saints Terrace, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing.

**The Old Armoury, Blake Street, Bridgwater**

4.39 This building is identified in the Townscape Heritage Initiative as having potential for mixed uses including residential. It is well located to the Town Centre. The building adjoins Durleigh Brook and redevelopment should be in conjunction with enhancement to this watercourse and improved pedestrian access to St Mary Street.

**PROPOSAL H50**

The Old Armoury, Blake Street, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing.

**Wesleyan Chapel, King Street, Bridgwater**

4.40 This site comprises the Wesleyan Chapel and adjoining former school rooms. It is identified in the Townscape Heritage Initiative for repair and restoration. Preservation of the interior of the chapel and greater public access is to be encouraged. It is therefore suitable for mixed uses with an element of residential development within the school rooms (also refer to Policy TC5).

**PROPOSAL H51**

Wesleyan Chapel, King Street, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing.
Land at Wembdon Road, Bridgwater

4.41 The current occupiers are seeking to consolidate their operations on a new site that will allow future expansion. The existing site is situated within an existing residential area and retention for employment use is not considered to be appropriate in this location when the site becomes vacant. Whilst a substantial part of the site will be made available toward the end of the plan period, relocation from the more recent industrial buildings may well not take place until beyond 2011. Therefore whilst the entire site is allocated, the assumed yield from the site to 2011 is approximately 200 units representing 5 hectares of the entire site. It is considered appropriate to include the adjoining land to the east currently used for small scale employment uses and car sales. This would be expected to be developed as part of the later phase.

4.42 Access will be from the Northern Distributor Road and a contaminated land assessment will be required before development commences.

PROPOSAL H52
Land at Wembdon Road, Bridgwater (as defined on the proposals Map) is allocated for housing.

Brownfield Housing Development: Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge

The following “brownfield” sites are identified for housing development.

Radio Station, Highbridge

4.43 The Radio Station, Highbridge is declared surplus to requirements. A comprehensive development and design brief will be required for the site.

4.44 The site lies within 250 metres of a gassing landfill site at Rosewood Farm which may need to be considered as part of site development and building design.

PROPOSAL H16
Radio Station, Highbridge is allocated for housing development (as defined on the Proposals Map).

Land west of Newtown Road and adjoining Boat Yard, Highbridge.

4.45 This site forms a large redevelopment opportunity close to the centre of Highbridge. The boatyard site offers the opportunity for a riverside development that incorporates marine facilities. Access will be from Newtown Road.

4.46 Provision is to be made for a cycle link from the adjoining Apex Park to the south side of the River Brue. This link would not only provide improved access to Burnham-on-Sea, but would also form part of a wider recreational cycle path along the coast.

4.47 The site adjoins the Bridgwater Bay National Nature Reserve and consultation with English Nature will be required.

PROPOSAL H17
Land west of Newtown Road, and adjoining Boat Yard, Highbridge (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing.

Land at Springfield Road, Highbridge

4.48 This site is currently occupied by the Woodbury and Haines furniture factory. This is to be relocated to the Walrow Industrial Estate. It offers an opportunity to locate housing close to the Town Centre and to significantly improve the existing environmental quality of the area. Land to the north of Springfield Road comprises a gateway into Highbridge and an opportunity to provide an appropriate urban edge.

PROPOSAL H46
Land at Springfield Road, Highbridge is allocated for housing (as defined on the Proposals Map).

Land at Highbridge Market, Highbridge

4.49 This site is located within the Town Centre and development of the site will require the relocation of the existing livestock market. It is a prominent location and comprehensive development will positively contribute to the regeneration of the Highbridge Town Centre. There is also an opportunity to enhance the setting of the Grade II listed Highbridge Hotel that adjoins the site.
PROPOSAL H60
Land at Highbridge Market, Highbridge (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing.

Greenfield Housing Development

4.50 In addition to allocations for brownfield housing sites, the housing target requires the development of greenfield sites for about 913 dwellings. (see Figure 4.1). The sequential strategy for the location of new development has been fundamental to the identification of an appropriate greenfield housing strategy. This is a strategy that would be applied irrespective of the housing land requirement.

Bridgwater

4.51 In this strategy Bridgwater is the first location to be considered for the release of greenfield housing sites. It is the principle location for employment, shopping and other services. The Structure Plan Strategy envisages growth to be focused on those locations that offer the best opportunities to reduce dependency on the private car. It is therefore consistent with this policy to concentrate any additional greenfield development close to Bridgwater in a location that offers opportunities to promote walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

4.52 As at April 2003, there were 1,152 dwellings committed with planning permission. A significant number of these are associated with the Northern Distributor Road and will be substantially developed during the first phase of the Plan (Fig 4.2). Planning consent has been granted for the entire site and 200 dwellings have been completed with a further 314 under construction.

4.53 The previous Bridgwater Area Local Plan allocated land at south Bridgwater for a comprehensive residential development. Following the publication of the revised PPG3 this allocation has been re-assessed. This sustainability appraisal has confirmed that this site is the most sustainable location for a comprehensive urban expansion. Development of the site will provide for a range of community benefits including provision of a replacement school for Somerset Bridge, public open space and a country park, and contributions to identified transportation infrastructure that will significantly improve access from the south into Bridgwater and provide for enhanced public transport. The site is well located to existing and planned employment opportunities and adjoins the principal public transport corridor between Taunton and Bridgwater.

4.54 It is considered appropriate to allocate the south Bridgwater site as a strategic site given that it is critical to delivering the strategy of the Local Plan. It is phased for the second half of the plan period in accordance with Policy H61. Completions will continue beyond the end of the plan period. The full extent of the strategic site is identified on the proposals map but only part is specifically allocated for development in this plan. Any future development beyond the identified allocation will be subject to discussion as part of a future replacement plan.

Burnham-on-Sea/Highbridge

4.55 As identified in the sequential strategy, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge offer the next most sustainable location for new development in Sedgemoor. However, given the allocation of additional brownfield sites and consequential reduced requirement for greenfield sites, it is not considered necessary to identify any further allocations in this location.

4.56 In line with the plans sequential approach to allocation of greenfield sites, only one small site is identified outside of Bridgwater. This site is at Cossington and includes the redevelopment of land within the development boundary. It is specifically associated with the improvement of community facilities.

Greenfield Housing Sites

4.57 The following proposal therefore comprises the greenfield housing strategy:

Land at South Bridgwater

4.58 This site is located adjoining the south edge of the Bridgwater urban area. The site is approximately 47 hectares located in two areas Dawes Farm to the east and Willstock Farm to the west. The land between the two areas is allocated as a country park (Proposal CNE18). The site is allocated for up to 1,460 dwellings through this plan and will be monitored through the ‘Plan, Monitor and Manage’ approach in order to ensure that the Structure Plan housing requirement is not significantly exceeded. An additional 14 hectares
of land to the west is identified within the development boundary on the proposals map and will only be developed should there be a need identified through future plan reviews.

4.59 This site is important in ensuring the delivery of the transportation strategy of south Bridgwater and it is therefore appropriate to identify it as a “Strategic Site” in accordance with national guidance. The Council recognise that large sites such as this will require long lead times in order to provide necessary infrastructure. It is therefore considered appropriate to allocate the site and to phase it in accordance with Policy H61 and Figure 4.2. As a strategic site this envisages completions by mid 2006 and continuing beyond the Plan period. Detailed phasing and infrastructure requirements will be set out in the approved Supplementary Planning Guidance. The detailed delivery of this transport strategy will also be set out in the Supplementary Planning Guidance. It is essential that as a strategic site development is treated comprehensively and a high level of cooperation between all stakeholders will be essential. The Local Planning Authority will therefore ensure that in determining any planning applications the full site is considered comprehensively.

4.60 Principal access will be from the Huntworth roundabout with secondary access from the existing showground roundabout. Access to the Willstock area will be via the Stockmoor Link (Proposal TM2s) with additional public transport access from either Wills Road or Rhode Lane. A comprehensive package of infrastructure will be provided as part of this development. This includes contributions towards a range of community benefits including provision of a replacement school for Somerset Bridge (Proposal PCS18), public open space including the country park, significant contributions to the transport strategy for south Bridgwater. Critical components that will need to be delivered in partnership with public funding include Proposal TM2b that will improve access from the south, provision of a park and ride site (Proposal TM2h), enhanced public transport and a comprehensive network of cycle and pedestrian routes.

PROPOSAL H55
Land at south Bridgwater (as defined on the proposals map) is allocated as a single strategic site for comprehensive residential development.

Land at Trivett's Farm, Cossington

4.61 The site (1.2 hectare) includes a number of semi-derelict farm buildings and the existing village hall. Development of the site will require improvements or the replacement of the village hall and provision of additional parking.

PROPOSAL H59
Land at Trivett's Farm, Cossington (as defined on the Proposals Map) is allocated for housing development.

Housing Densities

4.62 The issue of housing density has always been an important factor in determining the overall character of development in the District’s Towns and Villages. Government guidance requires consideration of density to ensure the general design of development is in sympathy with its locality, so contributing towards overall urban design objectives.

4.63 It is accepted that the Local Plan cannot be over-prescriptive for housing density, as this is only one aspect of the design of development. However, a key sustainability objective for making the most effective use of land for housing development in urban areas will require, in some circumstances, increases in densities. This is particularly where development is closely related to areas well served by existing or potential public transport or is well accessible to facilities (thus reducing the need to travel) or promotes other requirements. In all circumstances density should inform, and be an outcome of design, which should take account of these objectives and issues which comprise local context. Because there can be no predetermined approach to determining the appropriate densities for all housing development situations in the Local Plan, the approach is to address density either as part of:

a) the preparation of Supplementary Planning Guidance for allocated brownfield and greenfield sites; and/or

b) the statement of design response required for non-allocated development sites (Policy BE1); and/or

c) other policy considerations where density is a particular issue.
### Affordable Housing Potential Yield

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<th>Site</th>
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<td><strong>856</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Policies to Specifically Address Housing Densities

4.64 The following policies for density controls will be applied to promote the quality of good design in new development or to interpret sustainability objectives:

Allocated Brownfield Housing Sites

POLICY H27
Development on “brownfield” sites will be developed at densities which reflect the adjoining locality or may be increased in any of the following circumstances:

a) proximity to Town Centres;

b) to provide for special local needs such as small units for single people, the elderly or disabled;

c) proximity to existing or potential improvements to public transport; and

d) ensuring scope for on site provision of open space; together with a presumption in favour of reducing on site car parking provision.

This policy carries a presumption in favour of increased residential densities for development of urban sites but is also intended to recognise the varieties of site locations and contexts which will inform different design responses.

Allocated Greenfield Housing Sites

4.65 The development of each allocated greenfield site will require particular considerations to address a range of issues (which will be tackled through the preparation of Supplementary Planning Guidance). Density will be an important issue in expressing the physical structure of the development, its relationship to its context and the design of the wider urban area.

4.66 This approach is to provide further interpretation to Policy BE1 whereby a major initiative of the Local Plan is to require all development to provide justification for design responses to a site. There will be particular emphasis on the preparation of guidance for new greenfield housing development not only because of the sensitivity of location to open countryside, but also to ensure that an explicit range of objectives are addressed to optimise sustainability. Particular emphasis will be required to address:

a) concept and structure;

b) linkages to adjoining areas and facilities to promote walking, cycling and use of public transport;

c) building forms and objectives; and

d) provision for open space networks.

POLICY H28
Housing densities on allocated greenfield sites will be determined by the concept and structure of development to be addressed as part of Supplementary Planning Guidance, prepared where possible in partnership with developers, landowners and local Councils. It will normally fall within the range of 30 to 50 dwellings/ha.net, with potentially greater densities at places along good quality public transport corridors. Individual site densities will be determined through Supplementary Planning Guidance, which will take account of the concept and structure of the development and the views of interested parties.

Dwelling Mixes

4.67 Whilst the Local Plan sets out a strategy for the housing requirement for the District, it is also an important objective for this to be achieved in a way which provides for a good range of housing accommodation. With some housing developments there is a tendency to focus on accommodation within a particular part of the market. A good range and proportion of housing types will provide for a wide choice, help to interpret a structure to a development and contribute towards a varied physical environment thus promoting other quality aims. It is recognised that these objectives can only be addressed for larger housing developments where there is sufficient commercial flexibility. Policy H30 below therefore provides a basis for practical interpretation.

4.68 The most appropriate way to tackle this issue will be as part of Supplementary Planning Guidance which addresses the structure and density treatments for sites. The approach should be for the different densities to be expressed by the mix of housing types.
POLICY H29
The Council encourages the provision of housing types, sizes and tenures which are currently under provided, such as for single-person households, elderly people and those with disabilities or other special needs. Except on very small sites, allocated or windfall housing sites will be expected to provide an appropriate range of dwelling sizes, including 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings. This may be the subject of Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Affordable Housing

4.69 Government guidance encourages Local Planning Authorities to include policies on the provision of affordable housing in Local Plans. This is both through seeking affordable housing as part of large scale housing schemes and as exceptions to normal policies of restraint in rural areas.

4.70 The Council maintains an up to date Housing Needs Survey the results of which will be used to determine the requirement for affordable housing. The results of the 2003 Survey Update will guide the requirement for affordable housing until 2006. Levels of need determined by future surveys will be reflected in appropriate planning guidance of Local Development Documents in accordance with the legislative requirements at the time.

4.71 The level of need for affordable housing in Sedgemoor has now been assessed at over 600 units per year to 2006. This is a level of need that cannot be met through the normal development process. Furthermore, the objective of establishing ‘balanced communities’ mitigates against excessively high concentrations of affordable homes in any one development. For this reason the Council aims to achieve 35% overall affordable housing delivery from the total number of units developed on qualifying sites, in accordance with the advice in Sedgemoor Housing Needs Survey Update 2003.

4.72 For the purpose of this Local Plan affordable housing is defined as encompassing both low-cost market and subsidised housing (irrespective of tenure, ownership – whether exclusive or shared – or financial agreements) that will be available to people who cannot afford to rent or buy houses generally available on the open market. Low-cost market housing would have to be affordable to purchase by households with an average income for the area. Affordable housing might take the form of housing or flats made available at a subsidised rent, shared equity properties or shared ownership schemes and other forms. These should remain affordable to subsequent occupiers. It includes social housing used to provide accommodation in accordance with the objectives of a Registered Social Landlord. It also includes rural local need housing.

4.73 Registered Social Landlords are Housing Associations and other landlords registered with the Housing Corporation. They are required to have publicly available policies and procedures for allocating tenancies. These should be open and fair based on housing need.

4.74 There is specific government guidance on the minimum size of site on which affordable housing can be sought. The Plan adopts the threshold suggested for settlements of 3,000 population and above. For smaller settlements the guidance allows the setting of lower thresholds where exceptional local constraints can be demonstrated. These constraints in Sedgemoor include the very limited opportunities for sites of 25 dwellings and above to come forward in the rural settlements.

4.75 The Sedgemoor Housing Needs Survey provides the basis for the assessment of affordable housing need in any development. The requirement for affordable housing will be determined through negotiation taking account of this assessment and other legitimate planning requirements affecting the development.

4.76 Affordable housing will be sought as a proportion of housing on allocated and windfall sites which meet the criteria set out in Policy H30. The proportion will be individually assessed as stated above taking account of the level of need determined in the Council’s Housing Need Study and any detailed local study where relevant. The very high levels of need are explained above which underpin the Council’s aim that 35% overall of units on qualifying sites should be affordable. The targets for affordable housing provision is approximately 880 units.

POLICY H30
On suitable allocated and windfall housing sites, new residential development will be required to provide an element of affordable
housing, as defined in the Plan. Based on demonstrated needs, the district-wide target for the overall amount of affordable housing to be provided in Sedgemoor during the remaining Plan period (2004-2011) is 880 units. That represents about 35% of the total amount of housing to be built on allocated sites above this threshold. The amount and type of affordable housing will be sought and negotiated on a site by site basis, on sites above the following threshold sizes:

a) at Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge, Cheddar and North Petherton – in developments of 25 or more dwellings or residential sites of 1 ha. or more (or which forms part of an area 1 ha. or more which is capable of development);

b) in other settlements – in developments of 15 or more dwellings or residential sites of 0.5 ha. or more (or which forms part of an area of 0.5 ha. or more which is capable of development).

In all cases, the following additional criteria will help determine a site’s suitability for affordable housing:

i) the proximity of local services and facilities, including access to public transport;

ii) any particular costs of developing the site; and

iii) whether the provision of affordable housing would prejudice the achievement of other planning objectives in its development.

The Council will also have regard to the need to achieve a successful housing development. Wherever possible, suitable sites should incorporate a mix of types of affordable housing.

Indicative affordable housing targets for individual allocated sites are included in Figure 4.3.

Rural Housing for Local Needs

4.77 There has been a number of rural low cost exception schemes based on the policies of previous Local Plans. The Council recognises the difficulties which some local people face in being able to find affordable housing accommodation in their native parish.

4.78 The Local Plan cannot propose allocations which seek to restrict the occupancy or tenure of future dwellings since these are not matters which can be secured by planning conditions. The District Council may, however, give sympathetic consideration to individual development proposals meeting special local needs on sites outside existing settlements. Such an approach would conform with planning policy guidance which advises Local Authorities, exceptionally, to consider the release of small sites within or adjoining existing settlements which would not otherwise be allocated for housing.

4.79 The guidance makes it clear that such sites shall not normally be identified in Local Plans and will not be counted as contributing towards the Plan’s provision for general housing demand. However, when the Plan is reviewed, the contribution which affordable housing has made will be included in the calculation of the housing need which remains to be met.

4.80 In practice any proposal which satisfies the requirements of this policy is likely to involve an organisation such as a housing association or village trust capable of operating a suitable lettings policy. This will ensure that the benefits of low cost provision pass not only to the initial occupants but also to subsequent occupants. Appropriate Section 106 Planning Obligation Agreements will be sought to ensure retention of accommodation for local needs. Proposals to construct dwellings for sale on the open market offering a discounted initial purchase price only will not be acceptable.

4.81 The Council will require evidence of a genuine local need within the settlement concerned although the Council is prepared to extend the definition of local to include adjoining parishes. Categories of need will be expected to be those households unable to compete in the existing local housing market. These will normally be in the following categories listed in priority order:

a) have lived in the parish concerned for the previous five years; and

b) have a strong local connection with the parish concerned. Consideration will be given to:
i) family association in the parish who have lived in the parish for the previous three years;

ii) any past periods of residence in the parish; and

iii) whether any member of the household has permanent employment in the parish.

c) have lived in an adjoining parish for the previous five years; and

d) have a strong local connection with an adjoining parish as set out in b) above.

The Council will work with parishes and affordable housing providers to ensure consistent parameters are applied to parish housing needs surveys. Such parameters are likely to include a clear definition of catchment areas and client groups and a standardised survey approach which can be related to the District Wide Housing Needs Survey.

POLICY H31
In exceptional circumstances limited residential development on sites which would not otherwise be released for this purpose may be permitted provided it can be demonstrated that:

a) it meets a proven need for affordable housing for local people;

b) management of the scheme will ensure that the dwellings continue to meet such proven needs for initial and subsequent occupiers;

c) the site is within or immediately adjoining the development boundary of a Rural Centre/Village;

d) there is no significant adverse affect on the character of the existing settlement or surrounding countryside nor harm to the water environment; and

e) the site is close to public transport routes and has reasonable access to local services by foot and cycle.

Residential Caravans and Mobile Homes

4.82 Caravans and mobile homes are acknowledged as providing for a particular form of affordable housing accommodation. The Local Plan carries a presumption in favour of their provision subject to the same controls as for permanent housing, (including the provision of appropriate open space) and for their retention, as recognition of the contribution this can make to the range of housing accommodation.

4.83 The policy assumes that there will remain a continuing need for this form of low cost housing. In assessing proposals which would effectively remove this provision on a particular site, it will be a requirement to demonstrate that there is no longer a need for this form of housing in the locality and that this assessment will be considered in association with the needs identified by the Affordable Housing Strategy.

POLICY H32
Residential caravans and mobile homes will be permitted within the development boundaries of Towns, Rural Centres and Villages where they meet the criteria for housing set out in Policies H2 and H3 and where they would not be harmful to the street scene.

POLICY H33
Existing Residential Caravan and Mobile Home Sites will be protected from proposals which would lead to the unacceptable loss of the level of provision on the site.

Gypsies and Other Travelling People

4.84 As part of Local Plan objectives to make appropriate provision for a range of housing accommodation or facilities to meet local needs, there is a need to provide policy guidance for the establishment of sites for gypsies. Whilst there is no longer a legal requirement on local authorities to provide gypsy facilities, government advice presumes that proposals for the establishment of gypsy sites can be generated from the local authority and private sector. The Local Plan therefore provides a “criteria based” policy with which to assess proposals for gypsy sites. For planning purposes, gypsies are defined as “persons of a nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin, who travel for the purpose of making or seeking their livelihood.”
4.85 In more recent years people who are not traditional gypsies have taken up a nomadic lifestyle. As a response to the planning issues associated with this lifestyle, it is proposed to apply the same policy to such travellers as to gypsies.

**POLICY H34**
Small-scale sites to meet genuine needs for gypsies and other travelling people will be permitted subject to the following factors:

a) the site is located within a reasonable distance of local services (such as shops, schools and public transport);

b) the adequacy of vehicular access from the public highway, provision for parking and turning on site;

c) no adverse impact upon the appearance of the countryside and environment generally;

d) appropriate landscaping proposals to enhance the established character of the countryside; and

e) the likely impact on the amenity of local residents with regard to the potential for noise and other disturbance, from the movement of vehicles to and from the site, the stationing of vehicles on the site, and on the site business activities.

Sites will not be permitted in the Quantock Hills and Mendip Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest or other nationally designated sites.

**Agricultural or Forestry Workers’ Dwellings**

4.86 Planning policies towards development in the countryside are well established in Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 (1997) (PPG 7). This stressed the need for Local Plans to balance the need for environmental quality and economic and social development. National policy is to strictly control new house building in the countryside. Given the extensive rural nature of the District, it is recognised that there may be circumstances in which an established agricultural enterprise may justify the presence of a worker for its effective operation. The essence of policy is that proposals for isolated new houses require a special justification. This is to protect the landscape quality of the countryside from the harmful intrusion of unnecessary development. The circumstances in which such agricultural or forestry workers’ dwellings may be justifiable is addressed in PPG 7, which forms the basis of Local Plan policy. The approach therefore is firstly to set out the criteria to be met for testing or justifying the need (Policy H35), and secondly, for acceptable circumstances to provide policy control over the physical impact, scale, design, siting and setting of the dwelling (Policy H36).

**Justification of Need**

4.87 If planning permission is granted for a dwelling for an agricultural or forestry worker on a holding in the countryside, the dwelling may, in appropriate circumstances be tied by legal agreement to the adjacent farm buildings or to the agricultural land of the unit, to prevent it being sold separately without further application to the Council.

4.88 An important interpretation of this policy is that the “essential need” for the agricultural worker’s dwelling is determined by the needs of the enterprise at the holding. It is not the personal preferences or circumstances of the applicant, the owner or manager of the enterprise or the worker for whom the dwelling is intended. If the need is therefore established, Policy H36 below will also be applied to provide appropriate control over the physical aspects and impact of the new dwelling.

**POLICY H35**
Proposals for the construction of a permanent dwelling for an agricultural or forestry worker in the countryside, outside the defined limits of Towns, Rural Centres and Villages, will only be permitted where all the following circumstances are met:

a) there is clearly established existing functional need and financial justification for a dwelling for a key worker to live on the holding;

b) no other housing accommodation is readily available to meet the demand;

c) the necessary accommodation cannot be provided by the conversion of an existing building on the holding;

d) the need for accommodation on the holding is for a full-time worker, or one who is primarily employed in agriculture,
and does not relate to a part-time requirement;

e) the unit and the agricultural activity concerned have been established for at least three years, have been profitable for at least one of those years, is currently financially sound and have a clear prospect of remaining economically viable; and

f) there is no history (within the last five years) on the subject agricultural holding of dwellings with an agricultural tie being sold for occupation by persons that do not qualify for such occupation.

Physical Control of New Agricultural Workers' Dwellings

4.89 If the need is established for a new agricultural worker's dwelling by the test of Policy H35, careful consideration will also be needed to ensure that the physical impact is acceptable to the location. Experience demonstrates that in dealing with new dwellings to meet this need and it is appropriate for size limits on new dwellings. There can be a tendency for proposals to be larger than necessary for the living requirement, having an excessive impact in the countryside. If disposed of (with the agricultural tie) large houses tend to be beyond the financial means of potential purchasers. It is accepted however, that the first dwelling on a holding is likely to require an element of office space and facilities for outside workers (utility/shower space), its size may be larger than normal. As a guideline the maximum floorspace (measured externally and excluding any integral or detached garages) of the first or only dwelling on a holding should not exceed 200sqm or 150sqm for the second or any subsequent such dwelling; the floorspace of any integral garages should not exceed 40sqm. This will be operated in addition to objectives to control other physical impacts of such dwellings.

POLICY H36
Proposals for agricultural workers’ dwellings that are justified (in terms of Policy H35) will be permitted where all the following circumstances are met:

a) the new building is sited within sight and sound of the existing farm buildings;

b) the new dwelling employs the style, design, massing and materials which reflect the established building tradition of the locality; and

c) the new dwelling is subject to conditions removing permitted development rights under the General Permitted Development Order to extend the dwelling or to incorporate garage space into living accommodation.

Temporary Agricultural Dwellings

4.90 Temporary accommodation will normally be in the form of a caravan, portable cabin, or other temporary structure. If permission is granted it will normally be for 3 years and subject to an agricultural occupancy condition. Successive permissions will not normally be granted.

POLICY H37
In cases where an agricultural need for a dwelling has not been established but where an applicant is intending to create a new agricultural enterprise, permission may be granted for temporary accommodation. The applicant will need to demonstrate in addition to point a) of Policy H36 and points a), b), c), d) of Policy H35:

a) clear evidence of a firm intention and ability to develop the enterprise concerned; and

b) clear evidence the proposed enterprise has been planned on a sound financial basis which may require the submission of a business plan.

Agricultural Occupancy Conditions

4.91 In order to resist the potential for further pressures for housing development in the countryside, PPG7 also provides for agricultural occupancy conditions to be applied to new and any existing dwellings on the unit which are under the control of the applicant.

i) New Agricultural Workers’ Dwellings

POLICY H38
In granting planning permission for a new agricultural worker’s dwelling, an agricultural occupancy condition will be applied to all permissions for new (permanent or temporary) agricultural workers’ dwellings.
ii) Existing Agricultural Workers’ Dwellings

POLICY H39
In granting planning permission for a new agricultural workers’ dwelling, an agricultural occupancy condition will be imposed on existing dwellings on the holding which:

a) are under the control of the applicant; and
b) do not have occupancy conditions and need at the time of the application to be used in connection with the farm.

iii) Removal of Agricultural Occupancy Conditions

POLICY H40
Agricultural occupancy conditions will not be removed unless it can be demonstrated that there is no longer a continuing need for the dwelling for agriculture. To demonstrate this the applicant will be expected to show that the property has been marketed in an appropriate manner which should include all the following:

a) through one or more agricultural agent(s);
b) with an acknowledgement of the occupancy condition in the sale details;
c) targeted at people who could be expected to comply with the condition;
d) the asking price should reflect the discount attributable to the limited market appeal for this type of property; and
e) the marketing should be for a reasonable period of time (eg between 12-18 months).

Conversions of Existing Buildings to Residential Use

4.92 Whilst the best use for a building is usually that for which it was originally intended, there are many circumstances in which conversion to residential use will be acceptable in principle and contribute towards the Plan’s housing requirements. In certain circumstances, conversions can be supported within urban areas. It can help maximise the use of existing building stock, provide historical linkages of building traditions and variety of housing accommodation, and be part of design solutions for the development of brownfield sites. In other situations, appropriate conversions of part of existing buildings can contribute towards attractive mixed use schemes and contribute towards other Plan objectives such as the vitality of Town Centres.

4.93 Whilst there is a need for all conversions to be carried out in a sympathetic manner and with respect for the architectural integrity of the building, the greatest areas of policy concern relate to proposals for residential conversions in the countryside. Here special considerations need to be applied in accordance with PPG7. The policies for the conversion of buildings in the countryside are set out in the Countryside and Natural Environment Chapter (Policy CNE3). In all cases it is important that conversion to residential use should not prejudice employment opportunities (Policy E4).

Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside

4.94 Particular care needs to be exercised in assessing replacement proposals for existing dwellings in the countryside to ensure that the design response is sufficiently sensitive to the context and character of the particular countryside location.

POLICY H41
The demolition and replacement of an existing dwelling in the countryside which has been occupied in recent years and not become abandoned will not be permitted unless the proposal:

a) is similar in form and massing compared to the original building and impact on its surroundings;
b) does not increase the number of dwelling units on site; and
c) is of a design which is sympathetic in scale, materials and architectural details to the established building tradition of the locality.

Residential Curtilages

4.95 The extension of gardens to existing dwellings is an issue which has on various occasions created environmental concerns and policy guidance is required.
Most proposals for garden curtilage extensions are uncontroversial and present no significant policy or landscape issues. However, three potential areas of concern can arise relating to proposals to extend garden curtilages into adjoining agricultural land:

a) the impact on the landscape, as the land loses its rural character;

b) the possibility of creating a new development plot; and

c) the visual impact on the edges of settlements where garden extensions may protrude incongruously beyond established physical development boundaries.

There is little doubt that the “manicured” appearance of a domestic garden (with the attendant domestic paraphernalia of fencing, sheds, greenhouses, washing lines etc) is entirely distinct in character from the agricultural land or countryside beyond. These landscape considerations can also assume potentially greater significance in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. To some extent, the problem can be mitigated by careful attention to boundary enclosures or by removing, in appropriate cases, permitted development rights to erect outbuildings within the extended garden. In all cases it is the particular local circumstances which will determine the degree of impact and environmental concern. Policy H42 is therefore intended to provide sufficient control over the determination and impact of proposed garden curtilage extensions.

**POLICY H42**

Proposals for the change of use of land from agriculture to residential curtilage will be permitted where:

a) the proposal does not have an adverse impact on the character of the landscape; and

b) the proposal will not lead to a possibility for the creation of a new dwelling plot. Where there is no objection on principle to the proposal, conditions will normally be imposed which remove permitted development rights to erect garages, extensions and other curtilage buildings; and ensure appropriate treatment of boundary walls, fences and hedges.

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The emergence of the sustainability agenda within the planning system should be promoted and interpreted by practical policy objectives, wherever possible. A particular sustainability objective is to reduce the need to travel to employment and facilities. This is fostered to varying degrees by other Local Plan policies, (such as promoting mixed uses). There is also potential to provide greater opportunities for home working by flexibility of internal design of housing and/or provision of small scale facilities for workshops, studios etc. It is recognised that there are issues of impact on amenity by employment uses within predominantly residential areas, but an appropriate element of such flexibly designed accommodation can have commercial attractions and add to the character of housing areas (particularly in larger scale developments).

**POLICY H43**

Developers will be encouraged to provide a proportion of dwellings which provide opportunities for appropriate home working and which incorporate:

a) dwellings with flexible internal layouts for utilisation as work space (eg loft areas); and/or

b) integrally designed workshops and studio space.

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An important theme of sustainable development is to secure the best use of existing resources, which particularly applies to the existing housing stock. Throughout the District, but particularly in the Towns there are substantial areas of established, older housing relatively close to the Town Centres. In sustainability
terms, they are a particularly valuable asset pro-
viding accommodation within walking distance
of many facilities and with good access to the
urban public transport network. The nature of
this stock also tends to provide for cheaper
housing accommodation providing for smaller
households. In acknowledging the practical con-
tribution that these housing areas can actually
make to sustainability, it is important to provide
for the maintenance and enhancement of local
environmental quality as a contribution to the
attraction of the existing housing stock.

**POLICY H44**
Schemes of environmental improvement will
be promoted for selected older housing areas
in the Towns, particularly within Bridgwater,
Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge, which
address issues including:

a) poor physical environmental quality;

b) enhancement of cycle and pedestrian
   links to facilities, open space and Town
   Centres; and

c) parking, traffic calming and management.

**Accessible Dwellings/Disabled Access**

4.101 Several environmental initiatives promote the
widest possible accessibility for disabled persons
and access to new housing is specifically
addressed within the Building Regulations (also
refer to Policy TM8). The Local Plan also seeks to
secure the most appropriate physical design of
public areas to promote accessibility (Policy
BE1). In addition, particular attention should be
given to the needs of people who are disabled
in the design of new housing areas.

**POLICY H45**
In the design of new housing areas, appropri-
ate consideration should be given to needs of
those with disabilities with particular regard to:

a) access into the site;

b) specialist parking requirements; and

c) circulation within the site.
Introduction

5.01 The Local Plan has an important role to play in promoting economic development and employment opportunities. If the need to travel is to be minimised, ensuring there is a continuing and growing range of job opportunities is vital for present and future residents. The prospects for economic growth have been central to the determination of the Structure Plan's housing provision for the District so as to discourage commuting.

5.02 It is important that the Plan is responsive to the changing requirements of the local economy, the structure of which varies considerably through the District. The 1980's and 1990's have seen a strong emphasis on market-led economic development, in association with considerable re-structuring of employment patterns and industrial technology. Government guidance places increased emphasis on the need for Development Plans to take account of the locational demands of business and wider environmental objectives. It also emphasises the role of Local Authorities to fostering the development of small, medium-sized firms.

5.03 Throughout the 1980's and 1990's there was considerable restructuring of the District's employment profile. Sedgemoor now has a wider employment base. There is a significant concentration of industrial and service related employment particularly in Bridgwater. The Town has moved from being dominated by two or three major employers to a situation where several large companies are represented including a number of manufacturing firms in food, packaging and other industries. There are major new employment developments currently taking place at Express Park to the north of the Town and Huntworth Business Park to the south.

5.04 During the 1990's, Isleport Business Park was developed creating job opportunities in the Burnham / Highbridge area. Over 800 jobs have been created on the Business Park. Burnham-on-Sea continues to generate tourism related employment with considerable investment by the main leisure operators to extend the season. This is helping to increase full time employment prospects.

5.05 Cheddar is strongly characterised by the world famous Gorge and Caves, and thus relies heavily on tourism related employment. The recent expansion of the Cheddar Business Park is providing opportunities for a range of small firms to establish and expand.

5.06 A considerable number of Sedgemoor residents work outside the District. This commuting is principally to Taunton, North Somerset and the Bristol area. Whilst the Council will work towards greater opportunity for people to work locally, significant amounts of out commuting are likely to continue during the Plan period.

5.07 Many of the policy areas considered in other chapters of the Local Plan are employment generating. This chapter confines itself to issues relating to the supply of land and buildings for industrial, warehousing, office and other business use. Employment in these activities will only account for a proportion of future job opportunities and other sectors of the economy (such as tourism, shopping, construction, agriculture, quarrying and other service trades and professions) will continue to be significant sources of employment.

5.08 The District Council undertakes a high profile and active role in economic development initiatives, both on its own and working with partners encouraging the development of employment activity. The Local Plan policies are one part of a wider strategy to encourage economic activity.

Key Objective

To foster and promote the economic well-being of the District, through application of positive and flexible policies designed to support the establishment and expansion of a range of competitive businesses and enterprises which also contribute towards achieving local need, sustainability and quality objectives.

Employment Land Requirements

5.09 The Structure Plan requires about 95 hectares of land be made available in Sedgemoor for industrial, warehouse and business employment 1991-2011. It states that part of this allocation may be provided on sites allocated for mixed-use development. There is currently sufficient employment land already committed in Sedgemoor to meet this requirement. Some modest increase in land provision is advisable, however, in order to provide for further choice flexibility and assurance of land availability throughout the Plan period. (Figure 5.1)

5.10 In considering the identification of further employment land the Local Plan has been guided by the "sequential" strategy for develop-
### Figure 5.1 Employment Land Availability as at January 2004 (1991 - 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sedgemoor District</th>
<th>Bridgwater</th>
<th>Burnham/Highbridge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure Plan Provision</td>
<td>95.0 ha</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built or u/c 1991 - 2003</td>
<td>35.8 ha</td>
<td>27.3 ha</td>
<td>6.3 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sites with Planning Permission</td>
<td>54.6 ha</td>
<td>34.90 ha</td>
<td>17.7 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocated</td>
<td>22.0 ha</td>
<td>17.4 ha</td>
<td>2.0 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>97.4 ha</td>
<td>64.6 ha</td>
<td>26.0 ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes**

1. Figure excludes refurbishment and redevelopment of existing sites and properties. They are approximations based on large site information. They should therefore be viewed as an indication of the strategic employment land availability in Sedgemoor.

2. The Local Plan includes brownfield housing allocations that will use 15.0 ha of existing employment land. The largest single site totals almost 5.0 ha at Wembdon Road.
Employment and Economic Development
Chapter 5

Employment Land Proposals

Bridgwater

5.11 The majority of existing employment land commitments, (63ha) are in Bridgwater. Express Park, the single largest site (totalling approximately 42ha) is now under construction with the majority of the site now either complete or committed. It is anticipated that this site will be developed over the remainder of the Plan period.

5.12 The second largest commitment is the previously allocated employment site at Somerset Bridge. This site remains an appropriate employment site, being well related to established employment areas and proposed road improvements.

5.13 There are a number of smaller sites, (including land at Huntworth, the Showground, and Bristol Road) with planning permission.

5.14 Whilst there is a range of sites available for both immediate and future development there has been a rapid take up of employment land recently. If this trend continues there may be a shortage of employment land before the end of the Plan period. Furthermore, there may need to be exceptional releases of land for employment generating purposes. The conditions in which such exceptional releases might be made cannot easily be predicted and provided for within the Plan. For example, the Council is aware of the specialised and specific land requirements of employers in Bridgwater involved in the manufacturing of food and drink.

5.15 If it is demonstrated that there is a shortage of employment land or that there is a need for an exceptional release of land because allocated sites are unsuitable, the Council will seek to identify a further site or sites. In so doing the Council will adopt the sequential approach set out in policy STR4. It will also have regard to the relevant guidance in RPG10 or any successor Regional Spatial Strategy.

5.16 Little Sydenham Farm, a large site on the edge of Bridgwater, which has potential for rail freight access but which requires substantial road improvements, has significant potential as an employment site. This site, or any other site that might be identified, would require an approved planning brief, an agreed Transport Assessment, an approved Green Travel Plan and it would need to be in accordance with the relevant Transport Strategy for Bridgwater.

Somerset Bridge, Bridgwater

5.17 This site (12.5ha) is bounded by the River Parrett, the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal, the railway and to the west The Old Basin. Located between the existing Colley Lane and Huntworth Business Park employment areas the site is a logical location for industrial, warehouse and business use. Access to the site will be via the Colley Lane Southern Access Route (Policy TM2). This will be provided in association with residential development at south Bridgwater.

5.18 The Bridgwater and Taunton Canal and River Parrett are important recreational routes. The site is surrounded by a “green wedge” as defined in the Local Plan (Policy CNE4). This designation confirms the long-term significance of the edge of development in this area, retaining connections between countryside and the urban area and keeping open an area important to the character of Bridgwater. The development of this site will therefore require an appropriate and sensitive landscaping scheme.

5.19 Part of the site was a landfill site, comprising the infilling of former clay pits. In the past, landfill gas has been produced at this site and monitoring suggests biodegradation is still occurring.

5.20 A public footpath and private access road to residential properties (which is used as part of the National Cycleway Network) crosses the site from Crossway Swing Bridge to the railway bridge. This cycling and pedestrian link will need to be maintained in the development of the site. (The access to the housing east of the railway will also need to be maintained).

PROPOSAL E1
Land at Somerset Bridge, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) be developed for industrial warehouse or business use subject to the criteria as set out at Appendix 5.1.
Employment and Economic Development
Chapter 5

Land at former Wellworthys playing field, Salmon Parade, Bridgwater

5.21 This site (1.9 hectares) is located within the Colley Lane Industrial Park. It was formally used for recreation but has been vacant for over ten years. It is well located to existing employment uses and is one of the few remaining sites within the town.

**PROPOSAL E12**
Land at former Wellworthys playing field, Salmon Parade, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) be developed for industrial, warehouse or business use subject to the criteria set out at Appendix 5.1.

Land to the north of Bridgwater Retail Park, east of The Leggar, Bridgwater

5.22 This site (2.6 hectares) is located within the Castle Field Industrial Estate to the west of The Leggar. Contributions will be required toward the completion of The Leggar Link (Proposal TM2z).

5.23 The site adjoins known landfill sites and therefore before any development commences a Contaminated Land Assessment will be required.

**PROPOSAL E13**
Land to the north of Bridgwater Retail Park, east of The Leggar, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) to be allocated for industrial, warehouse or business use subject to the criteria set out in Appendix 5.1

Land at East Quay, Bridgwater

5.24 This site (0.4 hectares) is located on the west side of East Quay within the Castlefields Industrial Estate. It is adjacent to the River Parrett flood defences and any buildings will be required to be set back 8.0m in order to safeguard access.

**PROPOSAL E14**
Land at East Quay, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map) to be developed for industrial, warehouse or business use subject to the criteria set out at Appendix 5.1

Burnham-on-Sea/Highbridge

5.25 The second largest committed employment site in the District is the Isleport Business Park, Highbridge, (allocated in the Burnham-on-Sea Area Local Plan). Located on the east of the Town immediately to the north of the older Walrow Industrial Estate, there is currently about 10ha of land available for employment development.

5.26 The Local Plan seeks to relate housing growth closely with employment prospects. Significant additional housing is proposed within the Burnham and Highbridge areas (see Chapter 4). Although there is still a significant amount of employment land available on the Isleport Business Park, some further land should therefore be identified. In the longer term, beyond the Plan period, land in the vicinity of the Isleport Industrial Park is subject to further evaluation, likely to be an appropriate location for employment.

Extension of Isleport Business Park

5.27 This site (2 hectares) immediately adjoins the Isleport Business Park to the west and is bounded by Isleport Road to the east.

5.28 There is a residential property to the south, as well as a number of houses on the eastern side of Isleport Road. It is important that their environment is not adversely affected by any further development. It is appropriate to restrict development to Office, Research & Development and Light Industrial (Use Class B1).

5.29 It is also essential that a landscape buffer be established along the boundary with Isleport Road.

**PROPOSAL E2**
Land at Isleport Business Park, Highbridge (as defined on the Proposals Map) be developed for business use (B1) subject to the criteria set out at Appendix 5.1.

Cheddar

5.30 As the District’s largest rural settlement Cheddar, (a “Rural Centre”) has significant employment opportunities. There is currently about 4.5ha of employment land committed as phase two of The Cheddar Business Park, the majority of which has now been completed.

5.31 Given the amount of housing land already committed, at Cheddar the general desire to offer increased opportunity for local employment and
the possibility of further development, should the high housing growth scenario be adopted, it is appropriate to provide a modest additional allocation for employment land.

**Land at Steart Farm, Wedmore Road, Cheddar**

5.32 This site (2.6 hectares) adjoins the established Cheddar Business Park and was previously identified in the deposit version of the Cheddar Area Local Plan. It was excluded from the adopted Plan due to an over supply of employment land at that time.

5.33 It is well related to existing employment uses. There is also the opportunity to provide pedestrian and cycle links to the existing and proposed network.

**PROPOSAL E3**

**Land at Steart Farm, Wedmore Road, Cheddar** (as defined on the Proposals Map) be developed for industrial, warehouse or business use subject to the criteria set out at Appendix 5.1.

**Employment Development**

5.34 The employment land proposals support the Local Plans strategy for focussed development. In assessing other proposals for new development, extensions and redevelopment for employment the Local Plan will seek to ensure that this strategy is maintained.

5.35 The travel implications of employment development is an important sustainability issue. Employment is a major trip generator in terms of commuting and freight traffic. It is important that new employment development is achieved in a way that is compatible with the Transport and Movement polices of the Plan (Chapter 7). In particular, the Local Plan seeks to encourage public transport, walking and cycling (Policy TM1) and alternatives to road freight, it safeguards sites for rail freight facilities at Bridgwater and protects the District’s two active ports at Dunball and Combwich Wharves (Policies TM6 and TM7).

**POLICY E4**

**Industrial, warehousing, office or other business uses will be permitted within the Defined Boundaries of Towns, Rural Centres and Villages provided that:**

\[
\begin{align*}
a) & \quad \text{their environmental impact is compatible with adjoining uses}; \\
b) & \quad \text{in the case of industrial or warehousing development where significant levels of freight is likely to be generated there is safe access to the National or County Road network and/or rail freight facilities}; \\
c) & \quad \text{large employment developments with high employment densities should be located close to public transport nodes; and} \\
d) & \quad \text{in Rural Centres and Villages the scale and type of development is compatible with the settlement’s size, public transport accessibility and appropriate to their character and physical identity.}
\end{align*}
\]

**Employment in Rural Areas**

5.36 The Council is committed to an active economy in rural areas. A wide range of businesses can be accommodated in the countryside with appropriate safeguards to control their impact. It is important that employment opportunities are available in the rural areas if people are to have the opportunity for a job that does not involve long distance commuting by car and rural services are to be supported. It is an important part of achieving sustainable development in rural areas.

**Small Scale Employment Adjoining Rural Centres and Villages**

5.37 Normally, new and expanded employment opportunities in the rural areas should be accommodated within the defined boundaries of Rural Centres and Villages (Policy E4). There may be justification for the development of small-scale employment uses adjoining the boundaries of a Rural Centre or Village. The Council will need to be convinced that there are no opportunities for accommodating the development within the settlement boundary.

**POLICY E5**

**Outside but adjoining the defined boundaries of Rural Centres and Villages, permission will be given for new small scale business, industrial or warehousing employment provided that:**

\[
\begin{align*}
a) & \quad \text{the site is adjoining to the boundaries of a Rural Centre or Village within which there is no suitable site available}; \\
b) & \quad \text{in the case of industrial or warehousing development where significant levels of freight is likely to be generated there is safe access to the National or County Road network and/or rail freight facilities}; \\
c) & \quad \text{large employment developments with high employment densities should be located close to public transport nodes; and} \\
d) & \quad \text{in Rural Centres and Villages the scale and type of development is compatible with the settlement’s size, public transport accessibility and appropriate to their character and physical identity.}
\end{align*}
\]
b) there would be no unacceptable impact on residential amenity and the character of the countryside;

c) uses which would attract a significant number of people will be accessible by public transport; and

d) the scale and type of development is compatible with the settlement’s size, public transport accessibility and appropriate to its character and physical identity.

New and Existing Employment Uses in the Countryside

5.38 Existing employment uses in the countryside will in appropriate instances be permitted to expand within their existing sites, as long as their impact is not made worse. The redevelopment or rationalisation of existing sites may also be acceptable if the consequences for the character of the countryside and the surrounding area would not be significant.

5.39 The extension of employment sites in the countryside beyond existing boundaries will not be permitted unless some exceptional reasons can be demonstrated to set aside the normal presumption. There may in exceptional circumstances be a need for a countryside location, such as the processing of a local agricultural product. However new employment sites in the countryside will not normally be allowed.

POLICY E6
In the countryside beyond settlement boundaries the establishment of new employment sites and the extension of established sites will only be permitted where a countryside location is essential and no suitable alternative is available within or adjoining a local settlement.

POLICY E7
Within existing employment sites within the countryside limited extension of existing buildings or redevelopment will be allowed, provided that:

a) it is in scale with the existing use;

b) uses which would attract a significant number of people will be accessible by public transport; and

c) it does not increase the environmental impact of the site.

The Conversion of Rural Buildings

5.40 An important source of business accommodation is the conversion of rural buildings. They can also meet the needs of tourism, sport and recreation. Policies for the conversion of rural buildings are set out in the Countryside and Natural Environment Chapter (Policy CNE3)

Farm Diversification

5.41 Government advice encourages farm-based diversification. It recognises that farmers increasingly look to diversify beyond the agricultural industry in order to supplement their incomes. It is important that this broadening of the economy in the rural areas does not create unacceptable environmental impacts. (A policy for farm shops is set out in the Shopping and Town Centres Chapter - Policy TC14)

POLICY E8
Proposals to diversify the range of economic activities on a farm will be permitted if all the following criteria are met:

a) the proposal is complementary to the agricultural operations on the farm and is operated as part of the farm holding;

b) the proposal should re-use or adapt any existing farm buildings, which are available;

c) if a new building is justified it should be sited in or adjacent to an existing group of buildings, be of compatible design and blend satisfactorily into the landscape in design, siting and materials;

d) there would be no harm to the residential amenity of neighbouring property, landscape, wildlife or highway safety; and

e) uses that would attract a significant number of people will be accessible by public transport.

Loss of Employment Sites and Buildings

5.42 Land and buildings that are in employment use or with the potential to provide employment as
Employment and Economic Development
Chapter 5

5.43 The maximisation of brownfield development is fundamental to the locational strategy of the Local Plan, as set out in the "sequential" strategy for development (Policy STR4). A number of housing sites have been developed or are identified on what were employment sites. However, it is part of the strategy that the maximisation of housing on previously developed sites and in the conversion of buildings shall not prejudice employment opportunities. Employment activity is vital if housing growth is not to fuel increased commuting.

5.44 Where it is clear that the continued employment use of a site or buildings are no longer viable an alternative use will be appropriate. Changing requirements of businesses, restructuring of local industry and problems of access and impact on neighbouring land uses has rendered a number of employment sites particularly in Bridgwater and Highbridge inappropriate for future employment use. Some redevelopment sites will be appropriate for employment development, possibly as part of mixed-use schemes.

POLICY E9
Proposals which lead to the loss of existing or committed business, industrial or warehousing land or buildings to other uses will not normally be permitted unless:

a) an existing activity which is causing environmental problems would thereby be relocated to a more suitable site; or

b) other clear advantages would occur which outweigh the economic disadvantages; or

c) there is demonstrably no likelihood of a viable employment use or redevelopment; or

d) it can be demonstrated that there would be no significant implications for the quantitative or qualitative supply of employment land and buildings.

Improvement of Employment Areas

5.45 In some of the older industrial areas of the District, particularly in Bridgwater and Highbridge, businesses are operating in a poor environment in terms of layout, amenity areas or landscaping. The Council will require all new employment developments to be carried out to the highest standards appropriate to the site and location. Any redevelopment of substandard employment areas will also be expected to address existing deficiencies.

POLICY E10
The improvement of the environment, setting and attraction of existing employment areas will be sought and the implementation of appropriate improvement schemes in conjunction with employment operators and landowners will be encouraged.

Home Working

5.46 Established planning policies have sought to resist the development of employment uses where this would adversely impact on other uses, especially housing. Working from home offers significant scope to reduce the need to travel. Technological advances are making it possible for an increasing number of people to work entirely or partially from home.

5.47 In predominantly residential areas the aim is to maintain the residential character of the area and the dwellings in it. If it is judged that an existing or a proposed non-residential use does or would not meet that aim, then it is likely that a material change of use is involved and planning permission would be required. The Council will ensure that such developments are properly controlled by means of planning conditions and, in some cases, by legal agreements. Where appropriate the Council will use its enforcement powers.

5.48 Those considering working from home should seek the advice of the Council at an early stage. In essence the test is whether the non-residential use would generate more visitors, traffic, noise or fumes than if the property were used as a single dwelling without ancillary use. If it would not planning permission is unlikely to be required. If planning permission is required, either for a new proposal or as a result of the intensification of an existing use, then policy E11 will apply.
POLICY E11
Within predominantly residential areas proposals for the creation of a workplace within a dwelling, or a separate workplace within a residential curtilage, will be permitted provided that the essentially residential character of the building and the area is not significantly affected in terms of:

a) the number of visitors and the amount of traffic attracted;

b) the levels of noise and pollution created;

c) the provision of external lighting and advertising; and

d) the hours of working.
Shopping and Town Centres
Chapter 6

Introduction

6.01 Town Centres are the traditional focus for shopping. They are generally accessible by both public and private means of transport. The range of services and facilities in Town Centres is diverse and, in addition to shops, includes leisure facilities, financial and professional services, and various community services.

6.02 The traditional retailing role of the Town Centre has come under threat from Out-of-Town retail developments. Recent government guidance has recognised the importance of Town Centres and now emphasises the need to protect Town Centre vitality and viability.

Key Objective

To retain and promote a range and mix of retail facilities within our Towns and Villages to meet the needs of the community and which will preserve and enhance the character and vitality of those centres.

Shopping in Sedgemoor

6.03 Bridgwater is the third largest Town in Somerset and administration and shopping is primarily centred there. There has been a substantial increase in "Edge of Centre" retail floorspace as a result of the development of the Bridgwater Retail Park and the Safeway Supermarket. In contrast there has been little significant increase in Town Centre floorspace since Angel Place opened in 1986. In recent years there has been a decline in the vitality and viability of the Town Centre. The retail vacancy rate stood at almost 15% in October 2003 compared with a National average of about 11%.

6.04 The Towns of Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge are the other main shopping centres in the District. Burnham-on-Sea has a relatively modern supermarket located in the Town Centre. There is also a Local Centre at Rosewood Farm. The Town Centre itself has benefited from a traffic management and enhancement scheme that has improved the pedestrian environment. Highbridge currently suffers from a high level of vacant shops and the impact of through traffic.

6.05 Elsewhere in the District, the Rural Centres of Cheddar, Nether Stowey, North Petherton and Wedmore provide a focus for local retailing and services. Cheddar is a significantly larger centre than the other three with a good range of local shops, including a medium size supermarket that serves the surrounding area, and a variety of commercial businesses. It is therefore identified as a Town Centre where the sequential test for the location of new facilities should be applied.

6.06 There are also a number of smaller shops located in many of the larger Villages, as well as farm shops and other retail outlets such as petrol filling stations scattered throughout the rural area. Although farm shops principally exist to sell locally produced foodstuffs, there is a trend for them to sell goods which have been brought in from elsewhere.

Town Centre Regeneration

6.07 The District Council has identified the regeneration of Bridgwater Town Centre as one of its key objectives. Consultants were commissioned to undertake extensive surveys and consultations, which have been used to inform and influence the Town Centre Strategy. The focus of this strategy is to develop the Town’s potential, improve quality and maximise the benefits of its historic character. The purpose of the strategy is:

- to establish the current status of the Town Centre;
- to outline the key objectives for the regeneration of the Town Centre;
- to encourage the development of a shared vision for the Town Centre;
- to define Town Centre projects which will create a new sustainable role for the Town Centre and which can be delivered; and
- to be used to attract investment and encourage funding for Town Centre regeneration purposes.

6.08 A Transport Study has also been completed for Bridgwater. This will be an important influence on measures to improve accessibility (also refer to Transport and Movement, Chapter 7).

6.09 There are also a number of possible environmental improvement schemes being investigated for Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge. Specific enhancement schemes will be considered on their merits as and when they come forward.
Shopping and Town Centres
Chapter 6

Town Centres

6.10 Government guidance states that Town and District Centres should be the preferred locations for retailing and other uses which attract a large number of trips. Concentrating such developments in these locations not only helps to maintain their vitality and viability, it also offers the most sustainable location in terms of reducing the need to travel and dependency on the private car.

Location of Shopping Development

6.11 The Local Plan identifies Town Centre areas where it is expected that new shopping proposals will be accommodated. For the purposes of controlling new retail development, Cheddar Village is also identified as a Town Centre where the sequential test for locating new development will be applied.

6.12 The Town Centre of Bridgwater is a large area that includes commercial, leisure, and residential uses, as well as shopping. The preferred location for new shopping developments will therefore be within the Main Shopping Areas where the majority of retail activity takes place. The Local Plan defines the Main Shopping Areas based upon High Street, Fore Street, St Mary Street, Eastover and St. John Street.

6.13 Should it not be possible to find a suitable site in Bridgwater within the Main Shopping Areas, a Town Centre site will be the next preferred location for new retail development.

6.14 The Town Centres of Burnham-on-Sea, Highbridge and Cheddar are significantly smaller and more compact than Bridgwater. It is not considered necessary to identify separate Main Shopping Areas within them, the defined Town Centre area as a whole being the first preferred location for new developments.

6.15 Where it is not possible to find suitable sites within these areas, preference will be given to Edge-of-Town Centre sites. These are sites that are usually within 200 to 300 metres easy walking distance of the defined Main Shopping Areas in Bridgwater or of a similar distance from the defined Town Centres of Burnham-on-Sea, Highbridge and Cheddar. This distance will vary depending upon the size of the Town Centre and the attractiveness of routes to the Centre.

6.16 Where proposals are at an appropriate scale, the next preference will be sites in Local Centres. These are small groupings of shops and limited other services serving an immediate neighbourhood. They are therefore only appropriate for small-scale additional development. The Local Plan identifies the following Local Centres (as defined on the Proposals Map):

Bridgwater
- North Street
- Taunton Road
- Westonzoyland Road
- Bower Manor
- Wills Road
- Parkway
- Rhode Lane

Burnham-on-Sea
- Rosewood Farm

6.17 Only if no suitable sites are available in any of these locations, will “Out-of-Centre” sites be considered. In assessing proposals for retail development on sites outside of the preferred locations, the District Council will consider whether the scheme meets a need that could not otherwise be met.

POLICY SH1
Proposals for new retail development will be permitted firstly within Town Centres, then on Edge-of-Centre locations, followed by Local Centres, provided that:

a) there is an identified need for Edge-of-Centre development;

b) the proposal is of a scale appropriate to the Town Centre or Local Centre;

c) the proposal would help maintain and enhance the viability and vitality of the centre; and

d) the proposal would not damage the viability of other nearby Town Centres.

In Bridgwater, first preference will be for sites within the defined Main Shopping Areas.

POLICY SH2
Outside the preferred locations, retail proposals will not be acceptable unless it can be demonstrated that no other sites are available in accordance with SH1. Where this is the case, the proposal should be considered for approval.
case, proposals will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

a) there is an identified need for the development;

b) the development will not adversely affect the vitality and viability of nearby Town Centres or the rural economy including village shops; and

c) the development is accessible by a range of means of transport in addition to the car.

Major Shopping Proposals

6.18 Major retail developments may have a significant impact on neighbouring centres. Government guidance suggests that applications for retail developments over 2,500 sq m gross should be supported by evidence on the application of the sequential test, possible economic impacts, accessibility by a choice of means of transport and any environmental impacts.

6.19 Impact assessments may in some instances, be necessary for smaller developments. This is likely to depend upon the size of the proposal in relation to the centre or adjoining centres.

POLICY SH3
Major shopping proposals of over 2500 sq.m on sites outside of Town Centres, or likely to have a significant impact on neighbouring centres, should be accompanied by a Retail Impact Assessment. This should demonstrate:

a) the need for the development;

b) the application of the sequential approach;

c) the likely economic impact of the development on neighbouring centres;

d) the development’s accessibility by a choice of means of transport, and its effect on overall travel patterns and car use; and

e) any significant environmental impacts it may have.

Retail Warehousing

6.20 Retail warehousing is generally located in Edge-of-Town Centre or Out-of-Town Centre locations. Retail warehousing originally concentrated on bulky non-food goods but increasingly there is pressure to allow more general comparison goods to be sold. These developments almost exclusively favour the car-borne shopper and provide easy access with an abundance of free car parking. Occupiers prefer large flat sites facing or adjoining main roads.

6.21 Any new proposals should be located within the Town Centre, or on an Edge-of-Centre site if possible to encourage linked trips. Should a suitable site not be available, an appropriate Out-of-Centre site may be acceptable. Any sites would need to be accessible by means of transport other than the private car. In order to protect existing Town Centres, planning conditions or legal agreements may be used for Out-of-Centre developments. These may restrict the subdivision of units, and/or limit the range or types of goods sold.

6.22 Proposals will therefore need to be assessed against Policies SH1, SH2 and SH3.

Change of Use in Town Centres

6.23 As well as shopping, Town Centres are host to a wide variety of activities. These include leisure activities such as restaurants, pubs, clubs and cinemas, businesses such as banks, estate agents and other office uses, housing, education, and other community facilities. Many of these activities assist in extending the use of the Town Centre both throughout the day and during the evening. This diversity of uses and accessibility to people living and working in the area is important to sustaining their vitality and viability.

6.24 The Local Plan will therefore promote a flexible approach to other Town Centre uses and encourage a diversification of uses. However, it is important that a balance of uses is maintained. In particular, it is important that in those streets that already have a concentration of retail uses, there should be some control over the non-retail uses being introduced on ground floor frontages to maintain interest to shoppers. The Local Plan therefore identifies Main Retail Frontages in Bridgwater where the change of use at ground floor level to a non-retail use will be strictly controlled.
Chapter 6

Bridgwater Town Centre

6.25 The Main Retail Frontages are located in the central part of the Main Shopping Areas where there is greatest concentration of existing shops. The frontages are generally also in areas where considerable investment has been made in improving the shopping environment, either through pedestrianisation, provision of rear servicing (also refer to Proposal TM9), or redevelopment. Whilst it is accepted that an element of uses in Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services) and Class A3 (Food and Drink) may be appropriate, concentrations which detract from the shopping function should be avoided. The use of upper floors for other purposes, including housing, will be encouraged.

6.26 Elsewhere within the Main Shopping Areas and defined Town Centre, there will be greater encouragement for other Town Centre uses that support the shopping function of the Town as a whole. It is still important that over-concentration of non-retail uses is avoided. This applies particularly to residential development that can result in long frontages with only minimal pedestrian flows within the shopping street.

POLICY SH4
Within the Main Retail Frontages in Bridgwater, defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for changes of use to non-retail uses on the ground floor will be resisted. Exceptions may be made for uses falling within Classes A2 (Financial and Professional Services) and A3 (Food and Drink) of the Use Class Order if all the following circumstances apply:

a) the proposal does not form a prominent part of the shopping frontage or an important link between the frontages of retail uses;

b) the proposal does not form a continuous frontage with one or more existing non-retail uses(s); and

c) the proposal does not cause demonstrable harm to the vitality and viability of the Town Centre as a whole.

POLICY SH5
Within the Main Shopping Areas defined on the Proposals Map but outside Main Retail Frontages in Bridgwater, proposals for the following non-retail uses will be permitted, provided that they do not result in a concentration of single uses, where the cumulative impact results in a loss of retail units damaging to the vitality and viability of the Town Centre:

a) offices providing Financial and Professional Services (Class A2 of the Use Classes Order);

b) premises for the sale of Food and Drink (Class A3); and

c) Assembly and Leisure (Class D2).

Town Centres

6.27 Within the Town Centre of Bridgwater, but outside of the Main Shopping Areas, and in the Town Centres of Burnham-on-Sea, Highbridge, and Cheddar, a more flexible approach to non-retail uses will be supported. Such locations may be appropriate for leisure uses, financial and professional services, food and drink uses, community services and residential uses.

6.28 Although such uses may contribute to the diversification of the Town Centre, concentrations of single uses can cause local problems. The loss of retail premises may also adversely affect Town Centre vitality and viability. Proposals will therefore be assessed not only on their positive contribution to Town Centre diversification, but also on their cumulative impact to Town Centre vitality and viability.

POLICY SH6
Within Town Centres defined on the Proposals Map but outside of Main Shopping Areas, proposals for the following non-retail uses will be permitted, provided that they do not result in a concentration of single uses where the cumulative impact results in a loss of retail units damaging to the vitality and viability of the Town Centre:

a) offices providing Financial and Professional Services (Class A2 of the Use Classes Order);

b) premises for the sale of Food and Drink (Class A3); and

c) Assembly and Leisure (Class D2);
d) Non-Residential Institutions (Class D1); and

e) Residential (Class C1 and C3).

Land safeguarded for Retail Development

6.29 Following community planning and regeneration initiatives for Highbridge an opportunity for future retail expansion or rationalisation has been identified in the proximity of the existing KwikSave supermarket. It is therefore appropriate to safeguard this area in order that the potential for such use is not lost. The safeguarded area comprises surplus vacant railway land north of Market Street and west of the railway.

PROPOSAL SH18
Land north of Market Street, Highbridge is safeguarded for retail use.

Location of Non-Shopping Key Town Centre Uses

6.30 Town Centres are the preferred location for other uses in addition to shopping that attract large numbers of people. Such uses will sustain and enhance the centres’ vitality and viability. In addition, locating major travel generators in the Town Centre where there is the widest choice of means of transport, is a significant way to reduce the dependence on the private car and to achieve wider sustainable development goals.

6.31 Key Town Centre uses might include public and private offices, entertainment and leisure facilities such as cinemas and night clubs, hospitals and other community facilities. The first preferred location for such uses should be a Town Centre site (apart from Main Retail Frontages) that has good accessibility. The second preferred location would be an Edge-of-Centre site, which is well related to transport facilities such as public transport.

6.32 In exceptional circumstances where there is a clearly defined need, Out-of-Centre development may be permitted where it can be demonstrated that no suitable sites are available in the preferred locations. In these circumstances, the development must be accessible by a choice of means of transport.

POLICY SH7
The preferred location for non-retail uses that attract large numbers of people will firstly be Town Centre sites, followed by Edge-of-Centre sites, provided that they are:

a) accessible by a choice of means of travel;

b) of a scale appropriate to the size and function of the Town; and

c) would assist in sustaining the vitality and viability of the Town Centre as a whole.

POLICY SH8
Elsewhere, proposals for non-retail uses which attract large numbers of people will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that there is a defined need, which cannot be accommodated in the preferred locations. Where this is the case, preference will be given to proposals that involve the conversion of suitable existing buildings or the extension and improvement of an established facility. All proposals should be accessible by a choice of means of transport and should not seriously adversely affect the vitality or viability of any neighbouring Town Centre.

Shops and Services Outside Town Centres

6.33 Local shops and services are important in meeting day to day needs, particularly in rural areas. They also assist in reducing the need to travel and can act as important community focuses.

6.34 In Towns, such facilities are provided outside of the Town Centre in Local Centres and individual shops and offices. In the rural areas, there are shops, post offices and public houses in many of the villages.

6.35 Increasingly, these facilities are coming under threat. The loss of such facilities can be particularly damaging to local communities where there are few or no other alternatives. An objective of the Plan is therefore, to both maintain existing provision and to promote additional services.

6.36 The Local Plan Proposal Map identifies existing Local Centres as well as Rural Centres and Villages. For the purposes of interpreting policies, Local Centres are defined as small groups of shops or a single store, usually comprising newsagents, general grocery store, a sub-post office, and a chemist, serving local needs.
Resisting the Loss of Local Shops and Other Services

6.37 The Local Plan seeks to resist the loss of shops and other local services in Local Centres, Rural Centres and Villages. Easy access to a range of local services is an important way to reduce people’s dependency on the car. In rural areas, alternatives to the car such as public transport are often limited. It should also not be forgotten that a significant number of people, either in Towns, or rural areas, do not always have access to a private car and therefore rely more heavily on local services.

6.38 It is accepted that in many cases it is not possible to prevent the loss of local shops due to other factors such as economic viability and competition. However, the change of use of a local shop to a different use should only be considered where it can be demonstrated that the existing use is no longer viable and that attempts have been made to market the business as a going concern.

POLICY SH11
Proposals that would result in the loss of shops or other local services in Local Centres, Rural Centres, and Villages, will not be permitted where this results in a significant or total loss of such services to the local community. Exceptions may be made where it can be demonstrated that the existing use is no longer viable.

Provision of New Local Shops and Services

6.39 In Towns, Rural Centres, and Villages, encouragement will be given to the provision of small-scale local shops and services. In Towns and other identified Centres floorspace should not normally exceed 500 sq m gross. In the remaining Rural Centres and Villages the floorspace should not normally exceed 200 sq m gross.

6.40 Where new development is proposed, the Local Plan seeks to ensure that local facilities are already available and accessible by means other than the car, or will be provided as part of the development.

POLICY SH12
Proposals for small-scale local shops and services in Towns, Rural Centres and Villages, will be permitted provided:

- they are of a scale to serve only the local area; and
- they are accessible by a choice of means of transport.

Cheddar Gorge Commercial Area

6.41 Within Cheddar Gorge there is a concentration of shops, restaurants, teashops, and other commercial activities. These are associated with the tourism function of the area rather than the more general retail needs of Cheddar Village. Many of the businesses are seasonal and specialist in nature. The Local Plan Proposals Map therefore defines Commercial Areas within Cheddar Gorge. Most of these areas are within the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

6.42 These areas are not considered to be appropriate for general retailing, as they are peripheral to the Centre of Cheddar. A Town Centre or Edge-of-Centre location will be the preferred location for such uses (Policy SH1).

6.43 There are considerable concerns and difficulties relating to traffic congestion and parking in Cheddar Gorge (Chapters 7 and 11). Any new development in the Commercial Areas is likely to increase these traffic problems as well as impacting upon the environmental quality of the area. New proposals for shopping and food and drink will therefore be strictly controlled and restricted to sites within the identified Commercial Areas.

6.44 There may be opportunities to improve and enhance existing facilities in these areas. This will generally be encouraged although any proposals would still need to be carefully controlled. Individual proposals for new shopping and food and drink facilities, or improvements to existing facilities will therefore be considered against Policies TC13 and RLT14 as well as other policies in the Local Plan and the Cheddar Gorge Design Guide.

POLICY SH13
Within the Cheddar Gorge Commercial Area as defined on the Proposals Map, proposals for New Shops (Class A1) and Food and Drink Premises (Class A3), or the enhancement of these facilities will only be permitted if:

- they are of a scale to serve only the local area;
b) they would not result in additional traffic congestion or parking problems;

c) they do not cause demonstrable harm to the vitality and viability of Cheddar Centre as a whole; and

d) there would be no significant adverse environmental impact.

Farm Shops

6.45 Planning permission for farm shops is not usually needed for farms selling their own produce. Permission is required for the sale of food or goods produced elsewhere or if it has been processed. There is increasing pressure for farmers to look for ways to diversify their activities, farm shops are one such option. (A policy for farm diversification is set out in the Employment and Economic Development Chapter - Policy E8).

6.46 In many cases, the provision of farm shops can provide an alternative form of local shopping as well as supporting the rural economy. However, they might also have an adverse impact on the viability of existing village shops. There are also issues related to their accessibility and visual impact on the countryside.

POLICY SH14
Proposals for new or extended farm shops will only be permitted if:

a) there would be no significant adverse impact on the viability of existing shops in adjoining Towns, Rural Centres and Villages;

b) the local road network can safely handle the extra traffic the proposal will generate;

c) safe access is available or can be achieved; and

d) any proposed buildings would not have an adverse visual impact on the locality.

Conditions or a legal agreement may be imposed to limit the range or source of goods to be sold.

Petrol Filling Stations

6.47 Shops within petrol filling stations can also have an important role in providing local shopping and other services, particularly in rural areas. However, they might also have an adverse impact on the viability of village shops and are often not accessible without the use of a private car.

6.48 Shops within petrol filling stations will therefore be controlled and the amount of retail floor-space should normally not exceed 200 sq m gross.

POLICY SH15
Proposals for shops ancillary to petrol filling stations in rural areas (ie. outside defined settlement boundaries) will be permitted, unless they would harm the viability of existing shopping available in nearby Local Centres, Rural Centres, or Villages.

Garden Centres

6.49 Garden centres do not necessarily need to be located in open countryside and are not considered as an agricultural use. They are principally a retail outlet and produce similar impacts to other forms of retail warehousing.

6.50 The Plan seeks to locate garden centres in appropriate locations where their physical impact does not cause harm and where the traffic generated by the use can be absorbed by the road network. They will also need to be accessible by a choice of means of transport. The best location for garden centres will therefore usually be within or adjacent to Towns or Rural Centres. Planning permission will be subject to conditions restricting general retail sales and limiting the type of goods sold to those associated with horticulture or gardening.

POLICY SH16
Proposals for garden centres will be permitted where they are located on land within or adjacent to Towns or Rural Centres provided:

a) they are accessible by a choice of means of transport; and

b) there will be no adverse impact on the environment.
Permission will be subject to conditions limiting the type of goods sold to those associated with horticulture or gardening. Any additional services will be restricted to ensure they are ancillary to the main use.

Markets and Car Boot Sales

6.51 In recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of markets and car boot sales, which in turn have become more commercial and regular. These can cause problems of increased traffic, noise and general disturbance. The planning process can control regularly occurring markets but many infrequent events are allowed as permitted development. Not all sites are suitable for markets or car boot sales. The implications of large commercial markets for Town Centres also need to be considered.

POLICY SH17
Proposals for new markets and car boot sales will be considered against their impact on the vitality and viability of nearby Town Centres. Proposals must minimise unnecessary disturbance to nearby residents and ensure highway safety.
Introduction

7.01 An efficient transport system is vital to the economic and social well being of the District. Policy on transport and movement will therefore support the Local Plan’s strategy of balance between sustainability and controlled economic growth.

7.02 The private car allows a section of the population to achieve a high degree of mobility and lorries are essential to the modern freight distribution network. There are, however, several disadvantages to the current system of transporting people and goods. A private car is available to about 80% of households in Sedgemoor, the remainder have to depend on public transport. The current increase in use of motor vehicles is not sustainable, producing traffic congestion and pollution. Some towns are dominated by traffic and roads, with people taking second place.

7.03 There are challenges to encouraging a shift from the private car to other means of transport. Some bus routes do not operate in the evenings or on Sundays and cycling is perceived by some to be dangerous. In rural areas many villages have limited or no public transport services. There are two railway stations in the District but they have a restricted number of stopping trains. The rural character of Sedgemoor restrains the extent to which dependency on the private car can be reduced.

7.04 The Plan recognises these deficiencies but Sedgemoor District Council is committed to build on current initiatives and improve the situation by taking practical measures such as:

- entering into a quality bus partnership with bus operators and Somerset County Council;
- continuing in partnership with Somerset County Council to develop the second Local Transport Plan;
- preparing a Green Travel Plan for Sedgemoor District Council to provide a lead and encourage other employers in the District to adopt their own Travel Plans;
- producing a comprehensive Parking Policy for the District; and
- participating in the Somerset Rural Community Transport Partnership.

7.05 The vision of this Plan for the future is an efficient, high quality and sustainable transport system, accessible to all sections of the community. This will be achieved by maintaining and improving transport infrastructure while reducing dependence on the private car. The Plan aims to achieve the following key objectives:

Key Objectives

- reduced traffic congestion and pollution;
- maximum accessibility by sustainable modes of travel;
- easy movement for pedestrians, cyclists and the mobility impaired; particularly within our Towns and larger settlements;
- walking and cycling as the first choice for short journeys;
- best use of public transport routes and nodes;
- reduced risk of accidents and improved road safety; and
- reducing the length and number of motorised journeys and reducing reliance on the private car.

Transport Studies

7.06 Sedgemoor District Council and Somerset County Council worked together on Town and Corridor Transport Studies which identified the transport needs of the District. The studies looked at facilities for walking, cycling, public transport and car parking as well as the need for highways. The studies aimed to produce proposals for sustainable transport systems which allow for economic growth while minimising detrimental effects on the environment. The studies helped shape the second Local Transport Plan (LTP). The studies in the Sedgemoor area were:

Town Studies

- Bridgwater
- Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge
- Cheddar Gorge and Village
Corridor Studies

- Cheddar to Frome
- Bridgwater and Taunton to Minehead
- Bridgwater and Taunton to Shepton Mallet
- Bridgwater to Taunton and Wellington

7.07 All the studies were complete (except for Cheddar) and their findings have been used to inform the second LTP. Proposals in the LTP are incorporated in the Plan. The Plan will be modified as necessary in the future to keep it compatible with the LTP. Businesses, relevant organisations and the public have and will continue to be fully consulted on emerging proposals.

Safe and Sustainable Transport

7.08 Unrestrained use of the private car presents problems of pollution and traffic congestion. It is the aim of this Plan to promote sustainable forms of transport by the provision of high quality alternatives to the private car along with an adequate and safe highway system.

7.09 This will be done by:

- safeguarding pedestrian and cycle routes identified in the Transport Plans and shown on Figures 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 11.1. (The Proposals Map shows the proposed off-road routes only);
- safeguarding existing rights-of-way, bridle paths and cycle paths;
- requiring developers to demonstrate how their proposals will connect to the existing public transport system, footpath and cycle networks and an appropriate road within the highway system;
- requiring developers to provide the walking, cycling, public transport and highway infrastructure appropriate to the scale of the development and designed to National and County Council design standards;
- requiring developers of certain sites to produce a Traffic Impact Assessment. The assessment will include the traffic impact of the development on public transport, local roads and the motorway. The assessment for employment sites must demonstrate the measures which will be taken to keep lorry movements to a minimum and make the best use of rail transport facilities;
- designing cycle and pedestrian routes to minimise disruption to the environment, taking account of the maintenance requirements and the Local Drainage Boards and considering crime prevention measures; and
- limiting parking provision for developments and other on or off-street parking provision, to discourage reliance on the car for work and other journeys where there are effective alternatives.

7.10 New developments should be designed to cater for the requirements of buses. On small sites this will involve the construction of a pedestrian link to a bus stop. Larger developments will require a road layout suitable for buses, bus stops and shelters. The largest of developments may require a new bus route subsidised by the developer for the initial years of service.

POLICY TM1
Safe and Sustainable Transport will be achieved by the following means:

a) development will not be permitted which would prejudice the construction of cycle and pedestrian routes and bus lanes defined on the Proposals Map, unless suitable alternative routes are provided by the developer;

b) development will not be permitted which would reduce the convenience and safety of existing rights-of-way, bridle paths and cycle paths unless suitable alternative routes are provided by the developer;

c) development will only be permitted if the design makes adequate and safe provision for access by foot, cycle, public transport and vehicles so long as it’s appropriate to the scale of the development and in accordance with National and County Council design standards and Somerset County Council’s Highway hierarchy;

d) the Developer shall provide the transport infrastructure required by the development to an agreed phased programme. Where off-site works are are required, these shall be appropriate to the scale
Figure 7.1
TRANSPORT PROPOSALS, CHEDDAR

Key

Proposed Cycle Routes
- Red: Off Road
- Dotted: On Road

Existing Cycle Routes
- Blue: Off Road
- Dotted: On Road

Outside Sedgemoor District

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Scale 1:20000 approximately
Figure 7.2
TRANSPORT PROPOSALS, BURNHAM-ON-SEA AND HIGHBRIDGE

Key

Proposed Cycle Routes
- Off Road
- On Road

Existing Cycle Routes
- Off Road
- On Road

Other Local Plan transport policies

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Figure 7.3
TRANSPORT PROPOSALS, BRIDGWATER

Key

Proposed Cycle Routes
- Off Road
- On Road

Existing Cycle Routes
- Off Road
- On Road

Other Local Plan transport policies

Park and Ride

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Transport and Movement
Chapter 7

and nature of the development and shall be funded by the developer; and

e) development will not be permitted for proposals which would have a significant impact on the highway network without the prior submission of a Traffic Impact Assessment.

New Roads

7.11 Current government guidance stresses the need to consider alternatives to building new roads. Proposals for construction of major new highways must therefore, meet the most rigorous levels of justification. The Structure Plan for Somerset contains two such proposals, both for Bridgwater. They are the Northern Distributor Road and Colley Lane Southern Access Road. These highway proposals were examined and approved by the Bridgwater Transport Study and are central to the Bridgwater Transport Plan. Bridgwater Northern Distributor Road was built in 2001/02 and so has been deleted from the proposals map.

Colley Lane Southern Access Road, Bridgwater - TM2b

7.12 Taunton Road is the only main road into Bridgwater from the south, and connects to the motorway at Junction 24. Heavy Goods Vehicles travelling from the motorway from the Colley Lane Industrial Estate must travel the length of Taunton Road into the Town Centre to reach the industrial estate.

7.13 The Colley Lane Southern Access Road would take Heavy Goods Vehicles direct to the industrial estate, reducing traffic on Taunton Road, improving the environment of those who live and work in that area. The reduction in traffic would also ease outward bound bus journeys. Funds for this road will come from the LTP for Bridgwater and contributions towards transport infrastructure from the South Bridgwater development (H55). The road will require bridges over the canal and River Parrett.

Leggar Link Road, Bridgwater - TM2z

7.14 This proposal comprises widening and upgrading a short length of existing narrow road to current highway standards. The road will form a useful link between the Town Centre, Wyls Road Industrial Estate and the A38 Bristol Road.

Public funds and contributions from developers will be needed to finance construction of the road. Contributions towards the completion of this road will come in part from development in association with employment land allocation on land to the north of Bridgwater Retail Park, east of The Leggar, Bridgwater (Policy E13).

Stockmoor Link, South Bridgwater – TM2s

7.15 This developer funded road will provide primary access to the South Bridgwater housing allocation from the A38 Huntworth roundabout.

Burnham-on-Sea Eastern Distributor Road - TM2e

7.16 Berrow and Brean draw about 1.5 million visitors a year to the popular caravan parks and holiday camps on the coast. Almost all of these visitors travel from the motorway into Burnham-on-Sea and then northwards along the coast road to reach their destination. This extra traffic causes considerable congestion from March to November. The eastwards expansion of Burnham-on-Sea has taken place within the framework of a proposed “Eastern Distributor Road” between Stoddens Road and Burnham Road, Highbridge. The protected road line for that scheme was established in 1977 and included a short section of a potential northwards extension of the route towards Berrow. Housing developments since that date, including allocations made in the Burnham-on-Sea Area Local Plan have been required to fund this road construction and the route should be complete to Stoddens Road within the next few years.

7.17 The Burnham-on-Sea Area Local Plan (adopted 1990) noted that funding for a northwards continuation beyond Stoddens Road was not likely to be available during the Plan period, but the longer term aspiration for such a road justified the 550 metre section north of Stoddens Road being treated as a safeguarded road line. This route was examined as part of the county-wide Transport Corridor Study. The study did not consider this road as a scheme appropriate for public funding. As a result of these findings Policy TM2e only safeguards the section of the Burnham-on-Sea Eastern Distributor Road north west of the housing site proposal H16 (Radio Station, Highbridge) and not the section north of Stoddens Road.
Ashcott By-Pass - TM2y

7.18 Somerset County Council examined several options to relieve the effects of heavy traffic along the Central Somerset Strategic Access Route. This route includes the Villages of Walton and Ashcott. One option is the construction of a by-pass to the south of the Polden Ridge. A possible corridor for such a road was safeguarded in the Bridgwater Area Local Plan, adopted 1995. The route is amended slightly at the extreme eastern end to conform to the option for the Walton by-pass safeguarded in the Mendip Local Plan. Somerset County Council has retained this proposal as a possible major scheme during the Plan period.

It is acknowledged that the route safeguarded in the 1995 Plan conflicted with a County Wildlife Site. This conflict will be considered as part of the County Council’s work at the detailed design stage.

Car Parks and Park and Ride Sites

7.19 The Bridgwater Town Transport Study proposed two Park and Ride sites for the Town. It is unrealistic to assume that public transport will provide a travel option for many who live in rural areas. Travel by car will therefore remain the main means of transport for a significant proportion of the population of this District.

7.20 The purpose of the Park and Ride sites is to reduce car traffic in the Town Centre. This will improve the environment and increase the attractiveness of walking and cycling. Motorists may leave their car on the edge of town and use a high quality, high frequency bus service to the Town Centre. Only one site has a realistic possibility of construction during the Plan period.

Taunton Road, Park and Ride Site, Bridgwater - TM2h

7.21 This site would serve traffic from the south of Bridgwater and from motorway Junction 24. Buses serving the site will be able to make use of the inbound Taunton Road Bus Lane (Policy TM1). The provision of this site is linked to the South Bridgwater Housing Development. In order to reduce dependence on the private car consideration will be given to reducing the number of car parking spaces in Bridgwater Town Centre in conjunction with the provision of this Park and Ride site.

POLICY TM2
Proposals for development which would prejudice the provision of the following highway infrastructure defined on the Proposals Map will not be permitted:

a) Bridgwater Northern Distributor Road;
b) Colley Lane Southern Access Road, Bridgwater;
z) Leggar Link Road, Bridgwater;
s) Stockmoor Link, South Bridgwater; and
y) Ashcott By-Pass;

Park and Ride sites at:
h) Taunton Road, Bridgwater;

Parking for Vehicles and Cycles

7.22 It has been the practice in the past to make provision for the predicted peak demand for car parking spaces. This approach has resulted in car parks using land which could be put to more beneficial use. Abundant provision of car parking spaces also encourages the use of the private car to the detriment of other forms of transport.

7.23 The Bridgwater Town Transport Study encourages a shift from the provision of car parking space from long term parking for commuters to short term parking for shoppers. This policy encourages the use of sustainable transport for commuting while promoting the Town Centre for shoppers.

7.24 The Government recommends the adoption of limits to the number of car parking spaces at developments. The limit will depend on the nature of the development and the level of accessibility of the site by public transport, cycling and walking.

Non-Residential Parking

7.25 The provision of parking at non-residential sites can be split into operational and non-operational. Operational parking makes provision for vehicles which have to drive to the site to service the activities of the development. Non-operational parking caters for staff and visitors.

7.26 The number of operational parking spaces should be kept to the minimum practical level. Applicants will be requested to advise the Planning Authority of their operational needs.
7.27 Non-operational parking should be set at a reasonable level. Each site will be assessed on its merits. Maximum levels for various Use Classes are shown in Appendix 7.1, Table 3. Reductions will be made in line with Appendix 7.1, Tables 1 and 2 after consideration of:

a) the nature of the development;

b) existing facilities for walking and cycling to the development and any enhancement proposed by the developer; and

c) the existing level of public transport serving the development and any enhancement proposed by the developer.

7.28 The distinction between Areas of High Restraint and Areas of Standard Restraint referred to in Table 2 of Appendix 7.1 recognises that Bridgwater, with its generally better pedestrian, cycle and public transport links offers greater scope for reducing parking provision than other locations in the District. It is not intended that the definition of Areas of High Restraint should create an incentive to locate away from the Town Centre.

7.29 The following interim policy will be used pending adoption of the County-wide Parking Policy under preparation by Somerset County Council.

POLICY TM3
Car Parking at Non-Residential Development shall be provided on the following basis:

a) operational parking will be kept to the minimum necessary; and

b) non-operational parking will be set at a maximum of the level shown in Appendix 7.1, Table 3, reduced according to the availability of public transport and facilities for walking and cycling, as shown in Appendix 7.1, Tables 1 and 2.

7.30 Sedgemoor has a higher use of cycles than the national average. Cycling provides a healthy, sustainable mode of travel for short journeys. However, lack of secure cycle parking can be a deterrent to the use of cycles. Adequate provision of cycle parking at sites such as rail and bus stations, libraries, shopping centres and secondary schools will help promote this form of travel. The following standards will be used pending publication of the Somerset County Council county-wide standard.

POLICY TM4
Non-residential developments will make provision for secure and covered bicycle parking as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development Use Class</th>
<th>Cycle Parking Spaces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shops A1 A3</td>
<td>1 per 200m² gross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices A2 B1</td>
<td>1 per 5 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry B1 B2 B8</td>
<td>1 per 5 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary D1</td>
<td>1 per 5 pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Uses On their merits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Residential Parking

7.31 Residential Parking will generally be set at the level shown in Appendix 7.1, Table 4. However, a reduction will be permissible at sites where a lower level would be appropriate. These sites could be in Town Centres where there is existing provision for visitor parking, or in developments which have been designed with a reduced amount of communal visitor parking.

POLICY TM5
Car and cycle parking at Residential Sites shall be provided on the following basis:

a) car parking at residential sites should be set at the level shown in Appendix 7.1, Table 4. This level may be reduced where it can be demonstrated that shared car parking, public transport or other means can reduce the need for visitor parking; and

b) the developer will be encouraged to provide secure and covered bicycle parking at the rate of one space per dwelling, where no garages are provided with the dwelling.

Rail and Port Facilities

7.32 The Government’s White Paper on Transport encourages a shift of freight movement from road to rail and waterways. This shift would relieve pressure on the road network and bring benefits to the environment. It is expected that rail and water transport will be a major point in
the forthcoming revision to Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (PPG 13).

7.33 Sedgemoor has passenger rail stations at Bridgwater and Highbridge on the Exeter to Bristol line. The stations are used by a significant number of commuters travelling to Bristol or Taunton. The Plan aims to make the most of these facilities by encouraging the integration of bus and rail services and ensuring there is adequate provision for cyclists and pedestrians.

7.34 There is an operational rail/freight facility at Bailey Street, to the north of Bridgwater station (used for the transhipment of nuclear flasks to and from Hinkley Point and general freight). Until relatively recently there were a number of other rail freight sites in the Bridgwater area, all of which have the potential to be reinstated.

7.35 The Local Plan will safeguard these possibilities by not permitting development which would prejudice existing or future rail freight and passenger facilities.

**POLICY TM6**
Proposals for development which would prejudice the provision of the following rail freight and passenger facilities defined on the Proposals Map will not be permitted.

Land can be released for alternative uses following agreement with Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, Network Rail and appropriate rail operating companies.

**Passenger Facilities:**
- a) Bridgwater Station; and
- b) Highbridge Station.

**Freight Facilities:**
- c) Cellophane Business Park, Bridgwater;
- d) Royal Ordnance site, Puriton;
- e) Colley Lane, Bridgwater; and
- f) Bailey Street, Bridgwater.

7.36 Sedgemoor is fortunate to have port facilities at Dunball and Combwich. Dunball is particularly well located close to a motorway junction and has potential for future growth. These facilities will be safeguarded and their use encouraged.

**POLICY TM7**
Proposals for development which would prejudice the following existing port facilities defined on the Proposals Map will not be permitted:

- a) Dunball Wharf; and
- b) Combwich Wharf.

**Access For People with Disabilities**

7.37 Most people will at some time experience mobility difficulties of some form. The Local Plan aims to make it easier for people with disabilities to move to and from buildings, through open spaces and public areas. This will be achieved through application of the Building Regulations and imaginative design.

**POLICY TM8**
Development shall provide for the movement needs of the disabled by the provision of:

- a) appropriately located car parking spaces for buildings to which the public have access; and
- b) appropriate access to and between buildings to which the public have access.

**Servicing Facilities**

7.38 Non-residential developments, especially in Bridgwater Town Centre, require adequate servicing facilities to ensure goods vehicles do not come into conflict with pedestrians. Most of the pedestrianised shopping areas of Bridgwater are served by such facilities at present and it is important that new development does not compromise their operation.

**POLICY TM9**
Development will not be permitted which would prejudice the operation of existing service yards in Bridgwater Town Centre.
Introduction

8.01 The Countryside that exists today has evolved through centuries of change reflecting the interplay between the society of the time and its technology. But in recent decades the English countryside has been changing more rapidly, more dramatically and perhaps with more adverse consequences than ever before.

8.02 One of the core purposes of the system of Town and Country Planning which has been created during the 20th century has been to control urban development in ways which would minimise impact on the countryside. An approach based on “containment” has tried to limit the impacts and spread of urbanisation. But this is a damage limitation strategy which has had to cope with continuing pressures for development.

8.03 Areas of countryside have inevitably continued to be lost to urban growth. The construction of a national motorway network and other major road schemes have had direct impacts on the countryside and have often brought new pressures for development.

8.04 A countryside which might have previously undergone only gradual change and to which the primary threat was urban development, has also experienced significant changes in farming practices and forestry. Landscape features and wildlife which were once common place have been greatly depleted.

8.05 Many concerns about the changing countryside relate to activities which are outside the scope of the planning system. The Plan must aim to play its part in helping to protect the countryside - for the sake of its beauty, the diversity of its landscape and historic character, the wealth of its natural resources and its ecological, agricultural, recreational and archaeological value. But it is also clear that other agencies and landowners may have more significant influence.

8.06 The District is predominantly rural and has a twelve mile coastline on the Bristol Channel. Large tracts of the District are part of the Somerset Levels and Moors, a landscape which has been reclaimed from its natural wetland state.

8.07 Neither the coast nor the Levels and Moors carry any national landscape designation but both include large areas which are of designated National, European and International importance for nature conservation. Much of the Levels and Moors is also an Environmentally Sensitive Area, within which, farmers are eligible for grant-aid if they enter appropriate management agreements.

8.08 The District is bounded to the north by the Mendip Hills and to the south-west by the Quantock Hills, both of which are nationally designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

8.09 The District’s countryside and natural environment are not only assets meriting protection in their own right, but are also a major resource for tourism and recreation.

Key Objective

To ensure that the new Plan plays its part in ensuring that our countryside and natural environment is effectively managed, including its conservation, protection and enhancement. This broad objective can be translated into a number of supplementary objectives. These are:

- to safeguard good quality agricultural land;
- to conserve and enhance the quality and character of the District’s countryside, especially areas identified as having particular landscape or nature conservation value;
- to encourage the provision of additional features which contribute towards increasing our stock of natural assets, such as tree planting and the creation of woodland, wetland and other wildlife habitats;
- to conserve and enhance those places and environmental features which contribute to the character of our settlements;
- to improve areas of poor environmental, amenity or visual quality in both our settlements and countryside; and
- to protect and enhance our water environment (including the coast, rivers and other watercourses, wetlands, ponds and groundwater), for their own sake, and for their contribution to nature conservation, the landscape and our water supply.
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

8.10 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a statutory landscape designation confirmed at a national level. The primary objective of designation is “conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape”. This objective is pursued by a variety of methods, including the expectation that the landscape impact of new proposals will be a major consideration in development control decisions taken by the District Council.

8.11 In accordance with national guidance the environmental effects of new proposals will be a major consideration although it will also be appropriate to have regard to the economic and social well being of the areas. Particular attention should be paid to the siting, scale, design, materials and landscaping of proposed developments. Buildings, structures and landscaping should be designed with sensitivity to local landscape character and conserve, restore or recreate features which contribute to local distinctiveness.

8.12 National guidance states that proposals for major development in an AONB should be demonstrated to be in the public interest before being allowed to proceed. Consideration of applications should therefore normally include an assessment of:

i) the need for the development, in terms of national considerations and the impact of permitting it or refusing it on the local economy;

ii) the cost and scope for developing else where outside the area or meeting the need for it in some other way; and

iii) any detrimental effect on the environment and landscape and the extent to which that should be moderated.

(PPG7, paragraph 4.8 as amended by the Ministerial Statement on the planning status of AONBs in June 2000, subsequently restated in paragraph 22 of PPS7, July 2004).

This is clearly an important guiding principle but neither national guidance nor this Local Plan Policy adopt a standpoint of resisting all forms of development. In particular, we must recognise that the AONBs are not totally undeveloped landscapes and in some circumstances further development may be justified. For example, to meet the needs of an established farming or forestry operation and other rural businesses, local needs housing and conversion of existing buildings.

8.13 The boundaries of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are shown on the Proposals Map.

8.14 The Mendip Hills AONB boundary skirts around the main built-up areas of Axbridge, Cheddar, Cross and Shipham, but parts of the commercial area of Cheddar Gorge lie within the AONB, as do a number of residential and business premises on the fringes of Axbridge and Cheddar. Small settlements such as Compton Bishop, Rowberrow, Star and Webbington lie within the AONB and the A38 passes though it. There are also active limestone quarries in the area.

8.15 That part of the Quantock Hills AONB which lies within Sedgemoor District includes some hill-top common land but is primarily a landscape of farmland, woodland and forest. Small settlements such as Aisholt, Broomfield and Over Stowey lie within the AONB and a number of other Villages such as Enmore, Nether Stowey and Spaxton are nearby.

8.16 The particular landscape elements and characteristics which underpin the status of these areas as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are described in separate landscape assessment documents. For the Mendip Hills the relevant documents are “The Mendip Hills Landscape”, published by The Countryside Commission in 1998 which followed, and is based on “Landscape Assessment of the Mendip Hills” a report prepared by Chris Blandford Associates for the Countryside Commission in 1996. “The Quantock Hills Landscape – an assessment of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty” was published by the Countryside Agency in 2003, following a study carried out by Land Use Consultants for the Countryside Commission in 1997. Further information may also be found in the “Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary”.

8.17 Features which make up the special character of the Mendip Hills AONB or the Quantock Hills AONB will be protected where possible under the planning system. However, the planning system cannot directly protect many of the relevant landscape features (eg dry stone walls, heathland, unimproved grassland or other specific land cover) because changes are not subject to planning control. Such matters can be
Figure 8.1

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

Key

LEVELS AND MOORS

- Peat Moors
- Clay Moors
- Levels
- Levels - estuarine
- Levels - Islands
- Sea Edge/Intertidal Zone

MENDIPS

- Strawberry Belt and Footslope Villages
- Scarp slopes, West Mendip Summits and Cheddar Gorge
- Mendip Plateau
- Shapwick Levels and Valleys
- Brean Down

LOWLAND HILLS

- Isle of Wedmore
- Polden Hills
- Isolated hills
- Quantock Foothills
- Stockland Hills

QUANTOCKS

- Quantock Hills and Combes
- Quantock Summits

- Significant built-up areas
- Other settlements

- Reservoir
- Significant roads
- Railway
- District boundary

NOTE: Character areas are based on both objective assessment (from geology, topography and landcover), and subjective assessment (visual envelope, and response to the landscape). Character area boundaries should, therefore, be considered indicative rather than precise. Quantocks include areas defined in the ADS study as enclosed coombes and rolling hills and ridges. Quantocks include areas defined in the ADS study as summits and coombes with heathland and open southern summits.
more directly and appropriately addressed through AONB Management Plans and targeted land management advice and assistance which may be available through schemes such as Countryside Stewardship, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group and SSSI management. Further guidance can be found in the Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan (Mendip Hills AONB Partnership, 2004) and “The Quantock Hills AONB Management Plan” (Quantock Hills JAC, 2004).

POLICY CNE1
The primary objective of AONB designation is conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape. Development proposed within the Mendip Hills AONB or the Quantock Hills AONB will not be permitted if it would harm the natural beauty, or the exceptional character or quality of the landscape in these areas.

Landscape Character

8.18 Structure Plan Policy STR6 states that: “Development outside Towns, Rural Centres and Villages should be strictly controlled and restricted to that which benefits economic activity, maintains or enhances the environment and does not foster growth in the need to travel.” This policy of “strict control” reflects national planning guidance which also embodies a policy that “the countryside should be safeguarded for its own sake”, i.e. “countryside” is a recognised asset in its own right in addition to any associated attributes such as designated wildlife interest or agricultural land quality.

8.19 In addition to a broad policy of “strict control” of development in the countryside, there are many parts of the District’s countryside which are affected by statutory designations for landscape, wildlife or historic importance where policies give even greater priority to restraint. There are also areas where factors such as flood risk or agricultural land quality will constrain development.

8.20 If circumstances are such that the development proposed in the countryside is acceptable in principle, then Policy CNE2 will apply. Applicants should refer to the “Sedgemoor District Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary” (Revised Edition, 2003) for further guidance on how the “character areas” identified by the Countryside Commission and English Nature in “The Character of England” (1996) have been interpreted locally. The aim of this guidance has been to provide a better understanding of the varied character of the English landscape and in particular to foster recognition of the elements which create a sense of place or “local distinctiveness”. Figure 8.1 shows the Landscape Character Areas identified in the Sedgemoor study.

POLICY CNE2
Development which adversely affects local landscape character or scenic quality will not be permitted. In particular:

a) siting and landscaping should take account of visibility from publicly accessible vantage points; and

b) the form, bulk and design of buildings should have proper regard to their context in respect of both the immediate setting and the defining characteristics of the wider local area.

In determining planning applications the important characteristics of landscape character areas described in the Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary and/or AONB Landscape Assessments will be a material consideration.

Distinctive Features of the District

8.21 Structure Plan Policy 7 on the subject of Landscape Character requires that “particular regard should be had to the distinctive features of the countryside in landscape, cultural heritage and nature conservation terms in the provision for development”. Landscape features of significant local importance vary in scale, from large topographical features, such as the isolated hill of Brent Knoll, the distinctive profile of which is visible across a wide surrounding area, down to small scale natural or man-made features. Some may be significant local landmarks (eg church towers, prominent trees) and may be specifically protected under separate legislation (eg listed buildings, Tree Preservation Orders) but the importance of other features may simply be that they are one of the characteristic features of the area (eg local types of boundary wall, gateways and hedgerows).

8.22 Features such as hedgerows, rhynes, drystone walls, orchards, wildflower meadows, old farm buildings, woodlands, willow trees and ponds are important elements of the local landscape. The removal of many such features is generally not a matter which is subject of planning controls and
there has undoubtedly been a significant loss or deterioration of the stock of some such features. Financial and other support from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Countryside Agency, nature conservation bodies and others may safeguard and restore some of these countryside features. The planning system can play a particular part where development is proposed. This may be in the form of seeking the retention or repair of existing site features or by ensuring that a scheme provides replacement or new elements which will be a positive contribution to the stock of distinctive local features. Additional guidance can be found in the “Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary”.

POLICY CNE17
Development which would adversely affect distinctive features of the local landscape (as identified in the AONB Landscape Assessments, Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary or Village Design Statements) will not be permitted. Development proposals in the countryside, rural settlements and urban fringes should retain, replace, repair or otherwise add to the stock of features which create local distinctiveness.

The Conversion of Rural Buildings

8.23 The conversion of rural buildings can make an important contribution to minimising the need for new development and maximising the use of existing resources. In particular, it can help generate new rural employment opportunities. However, buildings in a remote location away from roads and settlements will require particular consideration in terms of the visual intrusion into the landscape of the development, and the access and other services running to it.

8.24 The Council will not permit the subsequent redevelopment or significant extension of a building converted to an alternative use. The purpose of allowing conversion is to bring into positive use a building that would otherwise be unused. Conversion is not acceptable if substantial rebuilding or significant extension is required. New buildings in the countryside are strictly controlled. Redevelopment and significant extension would be inconsistent with this.

8.25 The policy is applicable to all rural buildings. The retention and sensitive conversion of traditional farm buildings will normally be a positive benefit for countryside character. However, the merits of retaining modern agricultural buildings are likely to be less clear and may give rise to legitimate planning objections on environmental or traffic grounds. Re-use may need to be restricted by planning conditions and the Council may seek improvements in the landscaping of such structures when conversion to another use is proposed. In accordance with the advice in Annex G of PPG7 (1997) the Council will carefully examine any applications for re-use of buildings recently erected under agricultural permitted development rights and also consider the use of Section 106 Agreements in respect of farm diversification projects.

POLICY CNE3
In the countryside (outside settlement development boundaries), the re-use and adaptation of rural buildings will be permitted, provided that:

a) the building, of permanent and substantial construction, can be converted without significant rebuilding or extension;

b) its form, bulk and general design are in keeping with its surroundings; and

c) conversion does not lead to dispersal of activity on such a scale as to prejudice the vitality of settlements.

Conversions for small-scale industrial, commercial, tourism or recreation uses:

i) should not create environmental nuisances or pollution;

ii) should meet relevant parking standards, without harming the character or appearance of the countryside; and

iii) should contain all industrial and commercial activities and storage wholly or predominantly within building(s).

Conversions to residential use may be permitted where re-use for business purposes is not practicable or feasible and where the creation of a residential curtilage would not harm the countryside.

In all cases, the building should be of a suitable size and character for the intended use, and new building works should respect
that character. In addition, the site should have safe and adequate access, and all proposals should include measures to protect significant nature conservation interests. In determining proposals to convert an agricultural building, account will be taken of the period and extent that the building has been used for its original purpose.

**Countryside Around Settlements**

**8.26** The previous Local Plans have relied entirely on “Development Boundaries” as the planning policy tool for limiting the expansion of settlements and protecting surrounding countryside. In some instances such boundaries were reinforced by factors such as floodable land, agricultural land quality and AONB boundaries, but other significant attributes of surrounding countryside have not been so explicitly stated.

**8.27** Whilst general protection of the countryside “for its own sake” (irrespective of other designations) is a key element of national planning policy, it is inevitable that some countryside is lost to development as settlements grow. This has consequences not only in terms of “loss of countryside” in general terms, but can also have very particular local impacts. The countryside closest to our Towns and Villages can be important for a variety of reasons:

- it is most the accessible countryside for local people, providing opportunities for walking, nature watching and other activities which can be enjoyed without having to travel by car;
- it may have special significance as the setting for the settlement; and
- it may contain hedgerows, trees and woodland which are important in helping to absorb the settlement into its surrounding landscape; conversely the absence of such features can be a major deficiency.

**8.28** It is important that these functions and the relationship between settlements and their immediately adjacent countryside are given due consideration.

**8.29** The Development Boundary around settlements is the primary planning policy tool for containment of urban development during the Plan period. The Council believes it is also important that there is a clear vision of the extent to which some areas of adjacent countryside have very particular significance in terms of:

- a pattern of urban development which retains links with surrounding countryside, thereby has a positive, visible landscape context and enables townspeople to enjoy reasonable countryside access;
- approach routes and perceptions of a settlement;
- preventing the coalescence of adjacent settlements, a function which in some instances may be better achieved if accompanied by appropriate land management measures, such as the creation of wetland habitats or the planting of trees rather than merely retaining an undeveloped gap;
- the need to protect and enhance significant views; and
- providing natural corridors and habitats for wildlife.

**8.30** Those areas of countryside which are the most important and potentially vulnerable in respect of these issues are designated as Green Wedges, Green Edges and Strategic Gaps shown on the Proposals Map. The individual importance of each area is described in Appendix 8.1. The issue of countryside access is also addressed in Chapter 11.

**POLICY CNE4**

Areas of land which have particular importance as Green Wedge, Green Edge or Strategic Gap are defined on the Proposals Map. Whatever their individual character and function, these are predominantly open areas, mostly outside development boundaries, which retain a largely rural character and appearance. Positive land management which benefits the landscape, countryside access, amenity, nature conservation or urban area containment / enhancement functions of these areas will be encouraged and developments which would have a detrimental effect on these functions will not be permitted.

**Country Park, South Bridgwater**

**8.31** In conjunction with the development of two major housing sites at the southern edge of
Bridgwater (Proposal H55, Dawes Farm and Willstock Farm), this intervening low-lying land will be transformed into a Country Park. A mix of facilities and zones is envisaged including play areas, kickabout areas, playing fields, events fields, lakes and other wetland habitats, wildflower meadows, woodland areas, green corridors, footpath and cycle routes. Most of the site is within the floodplain and will need to serve as a flood water storage area in extreme events. Further details are set out in the Development and Design Guide for South Bridgwater.

PROPOSAL CNE18
A Country Park will be created on land at Stockmoor, South Bridgwater.

Protecting the Best Agricultural Land

8.32 Government guidance makes it clear that despite some changes in agricultural policy, the need to protect the basic resource of good quality agricultural land remains a relevant consideration. Agricultural land is classified by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), formerly Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), according to its potential productivity (determined by climate, site and soil factors and the inter-relationship between them). The “best and most versatile” land comprises Grades 1 (excellent), 2 (very good) and 3a (good).

8.33 Unfortunately, the “semi-detailed” survey work which is necessary to distinguish between Grade 3a (good) and Grade 3b (moderate) land has only been carried out in the vicinity of our larger settlements. Elsewhere in the District there are large areas of land which are classified as Grade 3 but with no distinction between 3a and 3b. This situation gives some difficulty for policy interpretation. The Proposals Map shows “best and most versatile” agricultural land on the following basis:

a) where the DEFRA semi-detailed survey is available the notation covers all land in Grade 1, 2 and 3a; and

b) elsewhere the notation on the Proposals Map covers only Grades 1 and 2.

8.34 Settlements where good quality agricultural land is a development constraint include: Axbridge, Berrow, Bridgwater, Cannington, Cheddar, Chedzoy, Enmore, Goathurst, Middlezoy, North Newton, North Petherton, Othery, Spaxton, Thurlaston, West Hunstspill and Westonzyland.

8.35 The actual grading of individual areas can be checked by reference to the Council’s Geographic Information System which holds mapping supplied in digital form by DEFRA. If more detailed information becomes available, in particular areas, the new grading or boundary information will supersede the Proposals Map, if appropriate.

POLICY CNE5
The best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a) will be protected from development. Planning permission for development affecting such land will only be granted if there is an overriding need for the development and either:

a) sufficient suitably located land of a lower grade (Grades 3b, 4 and 5) is unavailable; or

b) available lower grade land has a wildlife, landscape, amenity, historic, archaeological or other environmental value which outweighs the agricultural considerations.

If best and most versatile land needs to be developed and there is a choice between sites in different grades, land of the lowest grade available should be used, unless other sustainability considerations suggest otherwise.

Agricultural and Equestrian Buildings

8.36 In the countryside all new development will be strictly controlled (Policy STR3). In some circumstances a proposed new farm building may benefit from “permitted development rights” but the Council must still be notified in advance of the intended exercise of such rights and can require details of siting, design and external appearance to be submitted for approval before work starts. In all other cases agricultural buildings will need to be subject to the normal planning application procedure. The limited circumstances in which equestrian buildings might enjoy “permitted development rights” are outlined in Annex F of PPG7 (1997). Agricultural and equestrian buildings which require planning permission should comply with the criteria in Policy CNE6 and regard should also be had to...
other Local Plan policies which may be applicable (e.g. CNE1, 2, 7-10, 12, 14-16, BE11, HE11); equestrian buildings may also need to comply with Policy RLT13. Agricultural Building Design Guidelines for the Mendip Hills AONB and Guidelines for Horse-related Development in the Mendip Hills AONB are available in separate documents adopted as supplementary planning guidance in 2001 and 2004 respectively. Landscape impact should be minimised through such means as locating within or adjacent to an existing building group, tree planting and use of local materials or cladding, which is non-reflective and neutral-dark in tone and colour.

POLICY CNE6
Proposals for new agricultural and equestrian buildings in the countryside will be permitted where all of the following criteria are met:

a) The scale, materials, design and construction of the proposed building are appropriate to its intended function;

b) its siting and design are such as to minimise its effect on the appearance of the countryside and to avoid any harmful effects upon the occupiers of nearby buildings and land;

c) the building will not adversely affect any feature of significant environmental, archaeological or nature conservation interest; and

d) any new access to the highway is safe and respects local countryside character by sensitive design of any new gateways and boundaries.

Nature Conservation

8.37 PPG9 (Nature Conservation) sets out the Government's objectives for nature conservation and how it should be taken into account by the planning system. It recognises that nature conservation can be a significant material consideration in planning decisions and that designated sites should be protected, taking into account their relative significance as international, national or locally important sites. Government advice is that statutorily designated sites,'are protected from damage and destruction, with their important scientific features conserved by appropriate management'.

8.38 The whole of Sedgemoor's coastal territory and substantial areas of its countryside have been identified as "Sites of Special Scientific Interest", (SSSI's) i.e. sites which are nationally important for their flora, fauna, geological or landform features. Some of these sites have been additionally notified as being of international significance. Four Nature Conservation policies are set out below, dealing in turn with:

a) internationally important sites;

b) nationally important sites;

c) other sites; and

d) protected species.

A district-wide Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has been prepared and will be relevant to an appreciation of wildlife and ecology in the wider countryside and item (c) above in particular.

Internationally Important Sites

8.39 There are three types of "Internationally Important" nature conservation sites:

- "Ramsar Sites" listed by the Secretary of State under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, for their wetland wildlife and particularly as water fowl habitats;

- "Special Protection Areas" (SPAs) classified under the EC Directive on the conservation of wild birds (the "Birds Directive"), as the most suitable areas of habitat of threatened bird species which should be conserved in order to ensure their survival and reproduction; and

- "Special Areas of Conservation" (SACs) designated under the EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora ("the Habitats Directive") are selected for their importance as natural habitat types and as habitats of threatened animal and plant species.

8.40 With the exception of marine sites, all such sites are also (SSSI's) designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

8.41 The extent of land in Sedgemoor District currently affected by Ramsar Site and SPA status is shown on Figure 8.2. Both designations affect all
these areas, the coastal/estuarine areas being part of the Severn Estuary site and the inland areas being key sites in the Somerset Levels and Moors. Individual site boundaries can be identified more precisely by reference to the Proposals Map.

8.42 In addition to those areas, there are sites in the Mendip Hills, Brean Down and the Quantock Hills which have been put forward to the European Commission as candidate SACs, for example, Mendip Limestone Grasslands, Mendip Woodlands, North Somerset and Mendip Bats and Exmoor and Quantock Oakwoods. These sites are also identified on Figure 8.2. In accordance with the advice at paragraph 13 of PPG9 they must be treated in the same way as a fully designated site if development proposals affecting them are being considered.

8.43 In addition to the classified SPA covering the inter-tidal feeding areas in the Severn Estuary, the marine environment of the whole of the Severn Estuary is also under consideration as a possible SAC. If taken forward as a candidate SAC that marine environment will also be treated as if fully designated, but at present its status is national rather than international importance.

8.44 In considering development proposals affecting SPAs and SACs, first it must be established whether the proposed development is directly connected with site management for nature conservation and whether it is likely to have a significant effect. Taking account of advice from English Nature we must consider whether the effect of the proposal either individually or in combination with other proposals, is likely to be significant in terms of the ecological objectives for which the site was designated.

8.45 English Nature are expected to advise us on a case-by-case basis about a site’s conservation objectives and whether or not a proposal will adversely affect the integrity of the site. English Nature’s intention for this is the coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, that enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the populations of species for which it was classified.

8.46 Annex C of PPG9 gives further guidance and advises that if it is ascertained that a proposal will adversely affect the integrity of a site and this effect will not be removed by conditions, the Council must not grant planning permission except in the following closely defined circumstances:

a) there are no alternative solutions; and
b) the proposed development has to be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

8.47 Landowners and prospective developers should also note that designation as a SPA or SAC may affect permitted development rights granted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. In particular, the Habitats Directive prevents any development which is likely to significantly affect such sites from benefiting from permitted development rights unless the District Council has decided that it would not adversely affect the integrity of the site. Such a decision is arrived at after consultation with English Nature. Development in or near such sites should therefore, not proceed without first checking with the District Council and/or English Nature.

POLICY CNE7
Development which is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the conservation objectives or the integrity of a site of international importance (i.e. Ramsar sites, potential and classified Special Protection Areas, or candidate and designated Special Areas of Conservation) will not be permitted.

Nationally Important Sites

8.48 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are designated by English Nature and are sites of national importance for nature conservation, because of their biological, geological or geomorphological interest. National Nature Reserves (NNRs) are SSSIs which have the additional characteristic of being owned or leased by English Nature or bodies approved by them, or are managed in accordance with Nature Reserve Agreements with landowners and occupiers. The essential characteristic of NNRs is that they are primarily used for nature conservation.

8.49 The extent of land in Sedgemoor currently affected by SSSI or NNR status is shown on Figure 8.3. Site boundaries can be identified more precisely by reference to the Proposals Map. If any additional sites are subsequently notified and confirmed as SSSI these will also be subject to the provisions of this Local Plan Policy.
Figure 8.2

NATURE CONSERVATION SITES OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Key

- Ramsar Sites/ Special Protection Area
- Special Area of Conservation
- District boundary

* The Severn Estuary “possible” Special Area of Conservation does not yet have “international importance” status, but would do so if taken forward as a candidate site.
Figure 8.3
NATURE CONSERVATION SITES OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Key
- National Nature Reserves
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- District Boundary

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Figure 8.4
NATURE CONSERVATION SITES OF REGIONAL OR LOCAL IMPORTANCE

Key
- County Wildlife Sites
- County Geological Sites
- Local Nature Reserves
- District boundary

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8.67 Over half of the District’s residents live in the Towns of Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge. Open spaces and other areas of greenspace in our Towns include:

- parks and gardens;
- playing fields, sports grounds and children’s play areas;
- allotments;
- churchyards;
- woodland, hedgerows and individual trees;
- grass verges and landscaped areas;
- rivers and river banks;
- ponds (former brick pits or borrow pits) and associated margins;
- commons and greens;
- canal and railway margins, embankments and cuttings; and
- sand dunes and beaches (at Burnham-on-Sea).

These places have a mix of amenity, recreation, conservation, wildlife and historical value and can make a significant contribution to quality of urban life. Some of the sites are of designated nature conservation importance, but even those which carry no official designation can have a part to play in meeting important local needs. As the South-West Regional Biodiversity Action Plan (1997) observes: “Biodiversity in urban areas is important in its own right for its ecological value, but also brings other environmental, social and economic benefits. Trees can help to clear up airborne pollution, working on practical conservation projects can pull local communities together, being able to see natural landscapes has been shown to help people recover more quickly from illness. People in urban areas benefit from daily contact with wildlife, the quiet enjoyment of nature provides a break from the stresses of modern city life and can increase people’s feeling of well-being and pride in their local area.”

8.68 The revised version of PPG17 “Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation” (July 2002) advocates that local authorities should undertake robust assessments of need and audits of existing open space and recreational facilities. The Annex to PPG17 includes a typology which illustrates the broad range of open spaces that may be of public value and recognises that many areas can perform multiple functions. The types of space identified at paragraph 8.67 are consistent with that typology. Policy CNE11 was conceived before the suggestion of comprehensive assessment and audit was introduced in PPG17 and no such assessment for Sedgemoor has yet been undertaken, but on an interim basis the Policy is considered to be broadly consistent with the new PPG17.

8.69 The Council will:

a) expect the landscaping of new developments (whether on greenfield or brownfield sites) to make a positive contribution to future urban greenspace and habitat through such measures as the use of native trees and shrubs, and the retention of hedgerows and watercourses as wildlife corridors; and

b) seek land and/or other appropriate contributions for the creation of new (or improvement of existing) wildlife areas or natural greenspace.

POLICY CNE11
Development within and around settlements should respect the amenity, recreation, conservation, wildlife or historical value of existing greenspace and where possible enhance the stock of such environmental assets by:

a) appropriate restoration, enhancement and management of existing sites; and/or

b) improving public access; and/or

c) creating new greenspace sites.

These considerations will be particularly important within and around the urban areas of Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge but may also be relevant elsewhere in the District.

Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands

8.70 Trees and hedgerows are important for their intrinsic beauty, their contribution to the landscape or townscape, their role in absorbing carbon dioxide, screening eyesores or softening the appearance of new development and their value for wildlife. It is important that trees, hedgerows and woodlands are protected especially as new tree planting takes many years to make a significant effect on the landscape. The Council’s development control powers can be used to secure new planting and the retention of existing trees and hedgerows where
8.50 The key importance of SSSIs means that development proposals in or likely to affect them must be subject of special scrutiny and we must consult English Nature. Consultation zones around our individual SSSI’s have not be defined by English Nature, but as an interim arrangement the Council is consulting on sites within 750 metres of an SSSI boundary in rural locations. Development proposals within existing settlements are subject of consultation only if the site is within 100 metres of a SSSI.

8.51 Some SSSIs have additional designations conferred on them for specific reasons. Designations which confer “international importance” have been identified under Local Plan Policy CNE7, but the “national importance” of a SSSI is also enhanced if it is either a:

- National Nature Reserve (NNR);
- Nature Conservation Review (NCR) site; or
- Geological Conservation Review (GCR) site.

8.52 On the advice of English Nature, the Secretary of State will normally call-in for his own decision planning applications with a significant effect on these sites.

8.53 The terms of this Local Plan Policy reflect the guidance in PPG9. Where there is a risk of damage to a SSSI the Council is advised to consider the use of conditions or planning obligations in the interests of nature conservation. Conditions can be used, for example, to require areas to be fenced or bunded off to protect them, or to restrict operations or uses to specific times of year. Planning obligations can accompany permissions in order to secure long-term management, to provide funds for management, or to provide nature conservation features to compensate for any such features lost when development takes place.

8.54 The permission granted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 for the temporary use of land for war games, motor sports and clay pigeon shooting does not apply in SSSIs. This means that a planning application is required for all such uses of land within a SSSI, nature conservation and other relevant considerations can, therefore, be taken properly into account before the land is used. It does not mean that no such activities can take place in SSSIs under any circumstances. Some SSSIs are seasonal in their sensitivity, others can accommodate recreational activities without risk to their features of special interest.

**POLICY CNE8**

Development which would have a detrimental effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest or National Nature Reserve will only be permitted if:

a) it can be subject of conditions that will prevent damaging impacts on wildlife habitats or important physical features; or

b) other material factors are sufficient to override nature conservation considerations.

**Interest on Other Sites**

8.55 Government advice in PPG9 recognises that “our natural wildlife heritage is not confined to the various statutory designated sites but is found throughout the countryside and in many urban and coastal areas” (paragraph 14). Paragraph 24 advises that Local Plans should:

- “identify relevant international, national and local nature conservation interest”; and
- “be concerned not only with designated areas but also with other areas of conservation value and possible provision of new habitats”

8.56 The Council is advised to “have regard to the relative significance of international, national, local and informal designations in considering the weight to be attached to nature conservation interests” and that we “should only apply local designations to sites of substantive nature conservation value.”

8.57 PPG9 recognises three types of site designation which would constitute “sites of regional/local importance”:

a) “Local Nature Reserves” (LNRs) designated by Local Authorities under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949;

b) “Non-statutory Nature Reserves” established and managed by a variety of public and private bodies, eg County Wildlife Trusts,
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8.58 Within Sedgemoor there are currently two "Local Nature Reserves" and a number of Somerset Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves, i.e. sites recognised in categories a and b in the above list (NB several of these sites are SSSI’s). Sites relevant to the third category are “County Wildlife Sites” and “County Geological Sites” identified by Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC). The current extent and location of these “designated sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance” is shown on Figure 8.4. Site boundaries can be identified more precisely by reference to the Proposals Map, but may be subject to change over time. This Local Plan Policy will be applicable to the sites which are identified as a contemporary record at the time when a planning application is being considered.

8.59 County Wildlife Sites are identified by Somerset Environmental Records Centre using selection criteria based on habitats and species. The status of sites is kept under continual review as new information becomes available. The habitats and species are evaluated in a county, national and European context, including reference to the EU Habitats Directive, 1992, National Red Data Book Species and Somerset Notable Species, which in turn take account of county and national rarity. The criteria are consistent with the approach published nationally in the Wildlife Sites Handbook, 2nd Edition, (Wildlife Trusts, 1997).

8.60 The planning system can play a positive part in meeting biodiversity targets for habitat enhancement. The Sedgemoor Biodiversity Action Plan, prepared by Somerset Environmental Records Centre in 1999 and adopted by Sedgemoor provides specific guidance on priority habitats, priority species and Prime Biodiversity Areas. The underlying aim of a Biodiversity Action Plan is to conserve and enhance biological diversity. Sympathetic land management holds the main key and it is the actions of landowners/managers, conservation land-owning organisations and organisations providing financial support for land management which can make the most direct contribution. The planning system will aid the process primarily by safeguarding existing sites of identified nature conservation importance. The District Council will not permit development which would damage or destroy such sites unless there is an overriding need which outweighs the nature conservation value of the site and there is no suitable alternative. Where such development is permitted the impact shall be kept to a minimum and mitigating or compensatory measures provided which would reinstate the nature conservation value of the site.

8.61 The Sedgemoor Biodiversity Action Plan identifies five “Prime Biodiversity Areas” comprising designated wildlife sites and surrounding land which have the greatest potential for species and habitats to increase their range. The Sedgemoor Biodiversity Action Plan also includes habitat action plans for reedbeds, lowland calcareous grassland, coastal sand dunes and coastal/floodplain grazing marsh.

8.62 Where there is a risk of damage to a designated site, the use of conditions or planning obligations in the interests of nature conservation will be considered. Conditions can be used, for example, to require areas to be fenced or bunded off to protect them, or to restrict operations or uses to specific times of year. Planning obligations can accompany permissions in order to secure long-term management, to provide funds for management, or to provide nature conservation features to compensate for any such features lost when development takes place.

8.63 At present there are two local authority-controlled nature reserves in the District, at Berrow Dunes and Screech Owl, Somerset Bridge, Bridgwater. Several other County or District Council sites include County Wildlife Site designations and have been managed or improved with sympathy for local wildlife interest (e.g. Apex Park, Highbridge and Dunwear Ponds, Bridgwater). If appropriate opportunities arise, either in association with development proposals or on Council-owned land, the Council may create additional nature reserves. Site specific advice on such opportunities will be sought from English Nature and Somerset Wildlife Trust and may result in sites which are declared Local Nature Reserves (under the provisions of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act
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1949) or are managed by another appropriate body such as the Somerset Wildlife Trust.

POLICY CNE9
The nature conservation value of land outside nationally designated sites will be a material consideration. Development which would damage:

a) the nature conservation interest of a County Wildlife Site, County Geological Site, Local Nature Reserve or non-statutory Nature Reserve, or

b) natural features such as watercourses, hedgerows, trees, copses and ponds which provide wildlife corridors, links or stepping stones from one habitat to another,

will not be permitted unless the need for the development in that location is unavoidable and of overriding importance.

Where planning permission is sought for development which would damage the nature conservation value of a site, such damage should be kept to a minimum and mitigation or compensation measures provided.

Developers are encouraged to make positive provision for wildlife through appropriate habitat creation/restoration and subsequent management. If appropriate opportunities arise, the District Council will establish additional Local Nature Reserves and/or support other bodies in establishing additional nature reserves.

Protected Species and Priority Species

8.64 Certain plant and animal species, including all wild birds are protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act. Additional legislation protects badgers and bats. The protection offered by such legislation is additional to that offered by the planning system, but the presence of protected species is a material planning consideration. In addition to legally protected species there are other wild plants and animals identified in the UK Biodiversity Steering Group Report as “priority species”. Further information on which “priority species” are found locally is available in the Sedgemoor Biodiversity Action Plan. The presence of a “priority species” will be a material consideration when considering proposals which would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat. The Sedgemoor Biodiversity Action Plan records the presence of 59 legally protected species and 43 priority species, 13 of which are common to both lists. The Council will expect to be guided by English Nature not only in respect of protected species but also on the appropriate protection or mitigation strategy for any affected priority species.

8.65 Where there is a known or suspected protected or priority species likely to be affected by proposed development the District Council will consult with English Nature. Similarly, if a landowner or prospective developer suspects that there is a protected or priority species on a site, then English Nature should be contacted as soon as possible for advice. English Nature can provide advice on how best to treat protected or priority species. Often, they can be accommodated within development proposals. The necessary accommodation measures should normally be an integral part of the proposal and secured by appropriate planning conditions or planning obligations if necessary.

POLICY CNE10
Development proposals which would harm protected or priority species, or their habitats, will only be permitted if the proposal would:

a) facilitate the survival of a sustainable population of the affected species;

b) reduce disturbance to affected species to an acceptable minimum; and/or

c) provide adequate alternative habitats, preferably in situ, to sustain at least the current population levels of affected species.

Protecting and Enhancing Locally Accessible Green Space

8.66 Policies concerning sites with identified nature conservation importance have been set out above and Policies relating to the recreational value of open spaces are set out in Chapter 11 of the Local Plan, but open spaces take many forms and fulfil a range of functions which require us to look at development and conservation in a more holistic way.
appropriate on a new development site. Tree Preservation Order powers are also available beyond development sites. Concerns about the lack of control over the removal of hedgerows in the countryside led to new legislation in 1997, but the Council’s powers to issue a Hedgerow Retention Notice are limited to those circumstances where a hedgerow meets specific criteria for historic or wildlife importance. Issues relating to the management of hedgerows in general are outside the scope of the planning system but positive management is encouraged through other initiatives such as the work of the Somerset Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and the Somerset Hedge Group, both of which are supported by the District Council. The Council will therefore, expect proposals for development and redevelopment of land to include appropriate measures for retention of existing vegetation.

8.71 Where existing trees or hedgerows form a significant feature of development or redevelopment sites, the Council will:

a) require a survey showing their position, size and species (in accordance with the provisions of Standard BS.5837);

b) expect plans for new development to provide for the retention of existing suitable trees and hedgerows;

c) where appropriate, serve Tree Preservation Orders to ensure the continuing protection of important trees; and

d) impose conditions on planning permissions to ensure that adequate protection is given to retained trees and hedgerows during site clearance and building operations (in accordance with Standard BS.5837).

8.72 Landscape design as an element of the design and layout of development sites is dealt with in the Built Environment Chapter (Policies BE9 - BE12).

8.73 In the context of this policy “important” trees and hedgerows may include those that have an intrinsic value for landscape, townscape, historical or nature conservation reasons and/or have significance in a development context by providing amenity or screening. New planting should have regard to location, ground conditions and local landscape context and should normally be comprised of native, locally-occurring trees and shrubs or suitable introduced species (see Appendix 8.2 for a guide to potentially suitable species). If the removal of trees or hedgerows is permitted as part of a development, a planning condition may require that an equivalent number of appropriate trees and shrubs be planted on or near the site.

POLICY CNE12
In considering proposals for development, the Council will seek to protect important trees and hedgerows. Planning permission may be refused where these would not be retained, or acceptably replaced. The Council will also encourage the planting and proper management of new trees and shrubs.

Woodland Management

8.74 It is essential that woodlands are not only protected from development but are properly managed in order to enhance their amenity and nature conservation value and in appropriate cases, their commercial value. The District Council will use its powers to make Tree Preservation Orders where trees and woodland of amenity value are under threat and will take action against anyone destroying or damaging a protected tree. Protection is also afforded to trees and woodlands by the Forestry Acts and Regulations.

Tree Planting Grants

8.75 The Forestry Authority’s Woodland Grant Scheme provides the main grant aid to encourage all woodland establishment and management. Where resources are available, the District Council offers grants for planting native trees on local authority or privately owned land. To qualify for grant aid the scheme must have public benefit, usually this means it should be visible from a public right of way or from the highway. The District Council will ensure that proposed planting schemes do not conflict with nature conservation and archaeological interests.

Tree Planting Schemes

8.76 New tree planting will be encouraged in both urban and rural areas to enhance the local environment, with particular priority to improving the extent and quality of tree cover in the following areas:
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- where a serious tree loss has occurred and needs to be replaced;
- where the environmental quality of new development would be enhanced;
- where local amenity requires protection and/or screening from major development projects, main communication arteries and ‘bad neighbour’ industries and activities; and
- where a significant contribution can be made to improving the scenic, visual or wildlife quality of a landscape area or historic heritage area or feature, or a countryside leisure or recreation facility.

8.77 New tree planting should comprise broad-leaved species appropriate to the area, be well sited and designed relative to its surroundings and setting, facilitate subsequent care and management, and have no adverse affect on the conservation of the natural environment and historic and architectural heritage.

8.78 The District Council has identified a number of locations where opportunities for tree planting and structural landscaping schemes may be targeted during the Plan period:

a) approaches to Towns and landscape improvements to major roundabouts including Edithmead Roundabout (M5 Junction 22) and Dunball Roundabout (M5 Junction 23);

b) screening of existing industrial development on land near to the M5 north-east of Bridgwater and Walrow Estate, Highbridge;

c) in the vicinity of proposed new roads at Bridgwater (Northern Distributor Road) and Cheddar;

d) areas of countryside where serious tree loss has occurred due to the impact of Dutch Elm Disease; and

e) in the vicinity of caravan and camping sites at Brean and Berrow.

The Water Environment and Flood Risks

Development on Floodplains and in other Flood Risk Locations

8.79 Planning Policy Guidance Note 25 (PPG25) ‘Development and Flood Risk’ provides guidance on how flood risk should be considered at all stages of the planning and development process in order to reduce future damage to property and loss of life. This includes applying a risk-based approach through a sequential test which takes account of the level of risk at different levels of flood zone hierarchy (Zones 1, 2 and 3 of PPG25 Table 1). PPG25 recognises that the Environment Agency has not fully defined such flood zones. Floodplain mapping shown on Figure 8.5 represents information available from the Environment Agency at the time of the Local Plan Public Inquiry/Modifications stage.

8.80 Environment Agency flood risk mapping is continuing to evolve. Indicative floodplain mapping was previously shown on the Local Plan Proposals Map but now the preferred approach is to rely upon electronic mapping provided by the Environment Agency and installed on the Council’s Geographic Information System. This information will be updated periodically; to check the latest flood map data visit the Agency’s website:- www.environment-agency.gov.uk and follow the flood map link or telephone the Agency on 08708 506506.

8.81 Substantial areas of Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge are in the tidal floodplain but the standard of existing defences gives most of these areas protection against all but the most severe floods (0.5% annual probability of occurrence). In the event of these defences being overtopped or breached, flooding could be extensive but relatively shallow and the Environment Agency have advised that all new buildings should have suitably raised floor levels in order to reduce water inundation problems, which might arise if defences are overtopped or breached. Raised floor levels and other flood resistant construction measures are also likely to be required in other floodplain locations. In accordance with the advice in PPG25 (paragraph 60 and Appendix F) applicants should carry out an assessment of flood risk and the run-off implications of their proposals that is appropriate to the scale and nature of the development and the risks involved and submit this with the planning application.
Figure 8.5

INDICATIVE FLOODPLAINS

Key

Area at risk from river flooding, annual probability of occurrence 1% or greater (floodzone 3 'high risk')

Area at risk from tidal and coastal flooding, annual probability of occurrence 0.5% or greater (floodzone 3 'high risk')

Area defended against the risk of tidal and coastal flooding, to at least 0.5% annual probability standard (floodzone 2 'low-medium risk')

Land with no current flood information (area may include the floodplain of small watercourses and is likely to comprise land in all three floodzone designations

District boundary

This figure is based on information available from the Environment Agency at Local Plan Public Inquiry/Modifications stage.

Flood risk mapping is continuing to evolve; to check the latest data, contact the Environment Agency web (www.environment-agency.gov.uk) or telephone 08708 506506

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Predicted sea level rises and increased storminess arising from global warming and climatic change pose a particularly serious threat to Sedgemoor. This is because of a naturally soft coastline and the extent of low-lying land which is below high tide level. The area was seriously affected by tidal flooding in December 1981 and despite subsequent improvements of the sea defences, the existing defences do not provide complete protection to the new “once in 200 years” standard. The current sea defence strategy was decided as a component of the Bridgwater Bay to Bideford Bay Shoreline Management Plan (June 1998) prepared by consulting engineers on behalf of the Environment Agency and the relevant coastal Local Authorities. Extracts from a consultation leaflet published in 1998 describing the strategy for sections of our coast are reproduced at Appendix 8.3. Any detailed queries should be referred to the Council’s Land Drainage Manager.

From a Development Plan perspective, the Shoreline Management Plan Strategy aims to generally protect existing land uses, with “possible retreat” being considered only on undeveloped frontages between Stolford and Steart Point. However, the risk of serious flooding in extreme conditions clearly affects extensive areas and will be a development constraint.

**POLICY CNE14**

Development will not be permitted on “high risk” floodplain land unless:

a) an appropriate flood risk assessment has demonstrated that the level of risk is lower than that implied by the indicative floodplain mapping; or

b) flood water would not adversely affect the development; and

   i) the capacity of available flood storage would not be reduced;

   ii) the flood water and flows would not be impeded; and

   iii) the flooding risks elsewhere would not be increased; or

   c) there is no suitable alternative location and proposal includes appropriate and environmentally acceptable flood protection measures; or

   d) the proposal is itself an appropriate and environmentally acceptable flood protection scheme to protect existing development.

**POLICY CNE14A**

All new development proposals within identified floodplains or other flood risk locations should be subject of an appropriate flood risk assessment. Any new properties built within a floodplain (including areas of floodplain protected by flood defence schemes) should have finished floor levels set at least 0.5 metres above surrounding ground levels and any other necessary additional flood mitigation measures.

**Land Drainage**

Much of Sedgemoor District is formed by the low-lying “Levels and Moors”, drained by a complex network of semi-natural and man-made watercourses. Responsibility for land drainage and flood protection is shared between the Environment Agency, Internal Drainage Boards and to a lesser extent the District Council:

- the Environment Agency is responsible for those waterways which are part of the designated “main river” system;

- a Drainage Board has powers to undertake works and to control works carried out by third parties on any watercourse within its district other than “main river,” but it is usually concerned with those watercourses on which it carries out regular maintenance. These are known as “viewed rhynes” and form the major network into which other “field” ditches (maintained by the riparian owners) and surface water sewers can successfully drain; and

- the District Council has similar powers to Drainage Boards under land drainage legislation in respect of watercourses outside a Drainage District.

**8.85** The Drainage Authorities have to manage an often-complex system. Large parts of the District are dependent on effective land drainage for both developed and agricultural land use. Water levels and flows are managed to meet a range of agricultural, conservation and recreational interests and controlled to minimise the risk of flood damage.
8.86 It is important to ensure that new development does not create or exacerbate flood risks. Whilst the low-lying parts of the District are perhaps most vulnerable, the potential risks from intensified surface water run-off could be a significant issue elsewhere either because of a localised problem or because of the threat to land downstream which may be some distance away. The Council will consult with the Environment Agency and the Council’s Land Drainage Manager, who will additionally refer applications to the relevant Drainage Board as appropriate. In particular, it will be necessary to ensure that:

a) development does not impede access to carry out necessary watercourse maintenance work (Drainage Board bylaws commonly specify a minimum margin);

b) surface water run-off is dealt with in ways which minimise the risk of flooding and pollution; and

c) nature conservation and landscape issues are taken into account.

8.87 Surface water run-off from urban development has in the past tended to be drained directly to a piped drainage system and discharged to an available watercourse. In some instances it has been necessary to undertake major off-site works (e.g. enlarged culverts) to improve the capacity of receiving watercourses or create flood lagoon sites for temporary retention of storm water and flow attenuation. “Best practice” approaches which deal with rainfall as a resource rather than as a problem which needs to be disposed of, will be encouraged, eg:

a) soakaway drainage and permeable surfacing of hardstandings to recharge ground water;

b) rainwater storage for garden watering; and

c) treating ponds, open watercourses and wetlands as multi-purpose features performing not only drainage functions but also providing a landscape and habitat resource.

Further guidance on a range of sustainable drainage system options which may be practicable is set out in Appendix E of PPG25 “Development and Flood Risk.” The choice of appropriate measures will have to take account of local drainage and ground conditions. In some instances, development may necessitate substantial changes to existing drainage channels or the creation of new watercourses. Prospective developers are advised to contact the Council’s Coastal and Land Drainage Manager, the relevant Internal Drainage Board and the Environment Agency for advice at an early stage.

8.88 Proposals should also consider how contaminated surface water will be dealt with, the natural cleansing capability of reed beds may be particularly appropriate and again could be part of a multi-purpose approach to the landscape treatment of development sites.

POLICY CNE15
Development will not be permitted if:

a) it would increase the risk of flooding as a result of changes in surface water run-off; or

b) adversely affect water quality.

Groundwater Source Protection Zones and Aquifers

8.89 Groundwater Source Protection Zones have been defined by the Environment Agency in order to prevent contamination of groundwater which feeds an aquifer. If such water resources become contaminated rehabilitation can be extremely difficult or even impossible. A restrictive development control policy is therefore necessary and the zones are shown on the Proposals Map (in the Mendip Hills above Axbridge and Cheddar and a small area near Nether Stowey).

8.90 Groundwater Source Protection Zones are the particularly vulnerable areas in which development could cause a hazard to important water sources. In addition to these zones, the Environment Agency advise that developments which involve potential disturbance of other aquifers must also be given careful consideration. Major and minor aquifers as defined by the Environment Agency, and reflecting underlying geology, are shown in Figure 8.6. These aquifers are not shown on the Proposals Map but potential relevance to individual sites can be checked via the Council’s Geographic Information System.

8.91 All planning applications in the defined zones will be referred to the Environment Agency for
Figure 8.6

AQUIFERS

Key

- Major aquifer
- Minor aquifer
- District boundary

Source: Environment Agency

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their advice, but prospective applicants should also seek guidance from the Environment Agency prior to submission of a planning application. Examples of developments which would need particular careful consideration are:

- septic tanks;
- storage tanks for hydrocarbons or other chemicals;
- the manufacture, storage or use of organic chemicals; and
- any development which could give rise to contaminated surface water and/or foul or treated sewage effluent.

**POLICY CNE16**

*Development will not be permitted within a defined Groundwater Source Protection Zone or on a major or minor aquifer unless safeguards are provided against the possible contamination of groundwater and/or interference with groundwater flows and levels.*

**Coastal Zone Management**

8.92 Sedgemoor’s coastline is part of the Severn Estuary that is one of Britain’s largest estuaries and has the second highest tidal range in the world. A large proportion of the estuary is of designated International Nature Conservation Importance, but the coast is also important for tourism and recreational activities. The surrounding urban and industrial developments add demands and pressures on the coastal area. An estuary management project, the “Severn Estuary Strategy” was set up in 1995 and is working towards providing a non-statutory management framework for the Severn Estuary in line with integrated coastal management principles. The project is proceeding in partnership with the Environment Agency and it is anticipated that the completed “Strategy for the Severn Estuary” and associated “Action Plans” will be produced jointly with the Environment Agency and serve as the “Local Environment Agency Plan” documents for the Severn Estuary. As a separate but related exercise English Nature are co-ordinating the preparation of a management scheme for the Severn Estuary in anticipation of its designation as a European Marine Site. This will help the wide range of relevant authorities meet responsibilities that arise if the Estuary is also designated.
Introduction

9.01 The built environment represents the accumulation of centuries of building tradition and reflects the incremental evolution of decisions, needs, building forms, styles and use of materials. It is a product of great variety, which influences the quality of life and the functioning of towns, villages and the countryside. It is one of the most important factors which distinguishes this part of Somerset from everywhere else.

9.02 Town and Country Planning as a formal activity is a relatively recent phenomenon. It is concerned with the location, use and appearance of the built environment, made up of both individual and collections of buildings and spaces. While much new development is brought forward on an individual basis, the planning system should provide an overall framework, which has regard to the cumulative impact of development.

9.03 The Local Plan is the primary means of developing a range of policies targeted at securing the aims of planning for necessary, sustainable and quality development within the built environment. Sedgemoor has particularly varied built and natural landscapes, which have evolved over time. In consequence, the physical context within which new development takes place is extremely important.

9.04 The policy of focussing new development on existing towns will require prospective developers to assess their development proposals within a much broader context than their individual site. They will need to consider the relationship of the site to its built and natural surroundings and to its place within the existing spatial pattern of the Town. This approach was central to the design guidance work for South Bridgwater.

9.05 Furthermore, a Landscape Character Assessment for the District has been completed. This work identifies those aspects of landscape character, which should influence developers with respect to the location, type, form, design of new development and how their proposal should contribute towards the character of the locality. This will provide the basis for working with local communities in preparing Village Design Statements. These will provide more detailed context for the guidance of development.

9.06 Of equal concern to the promotion of quality new development is the need to conserve and enhance the present character of settlements and rural areas. The Council has already invested considerable resources in a number of environmental improvement schemes throughout the District, which although targeted at the historic environment, also underpin a range of tourism and economic development policies.

9.07 The promotion of sustainable development will require further policy initiatives with respect to what is sometimes called ‘green design’. While many aspects of this are not currently embodied in planning or other regulations, it is likely that such considerations will become increasingly important. The Local Plan, therefore provides a detailed policy with which to guide the assessment of sustainability for development proposals.

Key Objective

To ensure that necessary development is accommodated through an approach which maximises quality and sustainability considerations and which enhances the distinctive character of our built environment.

Sustainable and Quality Development

9.08 A central theme of the Local Plan is to provide sufficient guidance and policy control to promote sustainable and quality development. This approach is particularly linked to the Government’s emphasis on the need to ensure that necessary development provides a positive contribution to environmental quality at all levels. This should recognise the importance of adopting a design process which addresses a range of sustainability and quality issues and relates the development to its context. The intention is, that all new development should provide sufficient justification as to how the design process has taken account of a range of issues in leading to the development proposals for a particular site.

9.09 It is clearly recognised that some or all of the issues included in the policy are considered as part of the formulation of development proposals. The intention is that a detailed checklist of development issues is provided so as to explicitly and systematically assess how sustainability has been addressed through design and how the physical proposals relate to these considerations. The emphasis is on the explicit and systematic
assessment of identifying constraints and opportunities for sustainable design for all forms of development.

9.10 Appendix 9.1 provides extensive criteria against which, sustainable design can be assessed together with associated design applications. These have been included to provide strong directions as to how development could be moulded and the various design aspects which could be addressed. It is accepted that the list of issues addressed is extensive. Clearly, there will be varying opportunities for the full consideration of these issues and the various design applications dependant on the nature, size, complexity and impact of development proposed. The intention is that the ‘checklist’ will serve as a structured and detailed approach to the consideration of development and to allow for the creative application of design principles.

9.11 This approach to development comprises one part of the Council’s commitment to promoting sustainable development. It is the intention for this to accompany other initiatives outside the Local Plan including, Local Agenda 21 Forums, Sustainable Design Workshops with the development industry and the promotion of energy strategies.

POLICY BE1
Applicants for planning permission for all development will be required to submit justification as to how the proposal has considered a wide range of design criteria, including sustainable development issues. The detailed design criteria are set out at Appendix 9.1 together with more specific design applications and are summarised under the three headings below:

a Natural resources;
   i) bio-diversity and carbon fixing;
   ii) water;
   iii) land;
   iv) pollution and hazard.

b Energy and movement;
   i) accessibility and linkages;
   ii) energy strategy.

c Development structure;
   i) concept;
   ii) open space network;
   iii) built environment.

Applicants will be required to demonstrate they have addressed these issues. The extent will depend on the scale and the complexity of the proposal.

Alterations and Extensions to Dwellings

9.12 The alteration and extension of existing dwellings is a widespread process and can often promote sustainability aims by providing a more flexible use of existing housing resources. Whilst the issue of extensions to dwellings is a matter for detailed assessment in each individual situation, the Local Plan provides a basic level of design and principles for the guidance of this form of development.

9.13 It is widely accepted that there can be no universal policy application with which to consider all domestic extension proposals. The appropriate design response will of course be informed by the physical context to each site (for example, established building styles; detached, semi-detached and terraced).

9.14 In particular, careful scrutiny will be given to extensions which result in the terracing effect caused by the complete or partial filling of a gap within a row of detached or semi-detached dwellings and extensions that have a flat roof.

POLICY BE2
Extensions to existing dwelling houses and their curtilage structures should meet all of the following criteria. The proposed extension should:

a) be physically and visually subordinate to the existing building;

b) not compromise the character of the existing building;

c) not be visually intrusive upon the street scene, any surrounding development or the countryside;

d) not harm the residential amenity of any nearby dwellings (by reason of overshadowing, overlooking or visual dominance); and

e) be constructed of external facing materials which respect any locally established building traditions.
Extensions to converted dwellings in the countryside should respect the form, character, scale and detailing of the original building, such that its character and contribution to its setting are not harmed. This criterion will also be applied to curtilage structures such as outbuildings, garages and boundary enclosures.

**POLICY BE3**

Proposals for new or altered shopfronts should not harm the appearance or character of the building or its setting. They should:

a) provide an appropriate relationship to the whole elevation of the building with particular regard to the degree of horizontal and vertical emphasis of the building and adjoining buildings;

b) retain and repair any existing historic features on the shopfront;

c) make any blind or canopy an integral feature of a shopfront so that it is retractable, clear of any vehicular carriageway when open and with sufficient clearance so as not to endanger pedestrians;

d) use either internal lattice or removable grilles if a security shutter is proposed;

e) incorporate shopfront signs which in number, size, presentation and materials preserve or enhance the appearance of the building and its setting;

f) incorporate fascias which are in scale, in their depth and width, with the overall shopfront and the building in particular, do not extend upwards beyond the first floor sill level;

g) ensure any illumination of signs and fascias is by external means or in Town Centres by internal lighting of lettering and logos only; and

h) provide, wherever possible, an acceptable means of access for people with disabilities.

It should not be assumed that existing “express consents” for advertisements will be automatically renewed or that corporate styles of retail or commercial chains will be acceptable.

**Advertisements**

9.18 Outdoor advertisements are an important part of economic activity by providing information to passers-by. However, the appearance of buildings, streets and the countryside can be spoiled
by excessive or insensitive advertising. Accordingly a regime of advertisement control is in place, similar to the planning control system for development, which aims to control advertisements in the interests of amenity and public safety.

**POLICY BE4**

Advertisements will be permitted except where:

a) their siting, appearance, size, design, materials, colour and any illumination detract from their surroundings and any building to which they are attached;

b) they harm the character, appearance and setting of Listed Buildings or Conservation Areas;

c) they detract from the appearance of the countryside;

d) they create visual clutter when viewed with any existing signs; and

e) they are a hazard to public safety.

Poster hoardings will only be permitted in predominantly commercial areas in locations where they will not be unduly dominant and where they are in scale with their surroundings and any buildings to which they are fixed.

**Directional Advertising**

9.19 Directional advertising will be assessed in the light of Policy BE4. The Council has also published a Design Guide for Directional Advertising.

**Areas of Special Advertisement Control**

9.20 The Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, together with an area extending several miles to the east, is designated as an area of Special Advertisement Control. In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992 it is intended to reassess this order with a view to possible minor modifications. It is also proposed to consider whether any other parts of the District, such as the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty should be similarly designated.

**Quality of the Public Realm**

9.21 The Local Plan provides a range of policies to promote sustainable and quality new development. Of equal importance is the need to ensure that public and other spaces in the built environment, which collectively comprise the public realm, are maintained and developed to the best standard possible and embodies local distinctiveness as part of the different character areas of the District. Whilst responsibility for the quality of the public realm lies with a range of bodies (usually statutory undertakers) the Council has an important role in seeking to co-ordinate appropriate standards of work and facilities. This role is to promote the public attraction of areas, particularly in Conservation Areas and Town Centres and to contribute to physical identity.

9.22 The various statutory authorities are responsible for a wide range of services, the maintenance of which can cause considerable disruption particularly in built-up areas. A major concern relates to disruption of the highway and the various surfaces and the standard and type of reinstatement. This can sometimes be a problem in Conservation Areas where there may be historic pavements and materials. At other times such work may represent an opportunity to seek an enhanced standard of re-instatement at an acceptable extra cost. During recent years several of the statutory undertakers have acknowledged a duty, particularly in Conservation Areas, to give more sensitive treatment to their operations. This is clearly an area where a continued and increased level of dialogue between the Local Planning Authority and relevant statutory bodies is desirable to ensure that satisfactory treatment in Conservation Areas is achieved and also to ensure maximum liaison amongst the authorities to co-ordinate their works to minimise overall disruption.

9.23 Where it is necessary to excavate surfaces the District Council will require statutory undertakers to reinstate to an equivalent or higher standard. In some cases the Council may wish to seek additional funds in order that the works may be carried out to a higher standard or perhaps incorporated into a wider enhancement scheme. The District Council will also attempt to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for any necessary salvage of materials.
9.24 The quality, safety and degree of accessibility provided by the public realm is of particular importance for those with varying degrees of disability. Clearly, the detailed issues of physical access to individual buildings are part of the initiatives to promote disabled access, but it is important to attempt to promote, wherever possible, a barrier free environment.

POLICY BE5
The Council will seek the co-operation of the statutory undertakers to ensure that:

a) the impact of necessary installations is minimised and will encourage the under grounding of overhead cables, rationalising the use, number and size of road signs and replacing unsightly street furniture giving priority to Conservation Areas and Town Centres; and

b) all maintenance and installation proposals promote the principles of a barrier-free environment.

Mixed-Uses

9.25 As part of the Government’s objectives to promote sustainability in development and particularly to reduce the need to travel, there is encouragement for appropriate development schemes, which incorporate a mix of uses. Whilst there is no clear and detailed guidance as to how this objective is translated into specific Local Plan provisions, the approach is intended to erode the strict zoning of land uses where an appropriate variety and mix of uses would be acceptable. In assessing this issue, the considerations where mixed uses would apply will vary dependent on local circumstances. The Local Plan therefore, identifies a range of situations in which mixed uses will be positively promoted and where this would support other objectives of the Plan.

9.26 In considering specific proposals for mixed-use developments, the onus will be on applicants to demonstrate that there will be no unacceptable impact of the proposed uses on adjacent or surrounding areas.

POLICY BE6
A mix of uses will be permitted in the following circumstances where the proposals will promote the planning objectives identified:

a) Town Centres: Proposals which bring into use vacant upper floors of buildings particularly for small scale residential use;

b) Brownfield Sites in Urban Areas: Proposals which provide acceptable ancillary uses to residential development, which do not conflict with retail policies of the Local Plan, which are close to the Town Centre and which do not create an identifiable and unacceptable impact on surrounding land uses;

c) Under-Used Buildings: Proposals which will provide for the economic use of under-used or vacant buildings and which do not compromise other policies or proposals of the Local Plan.

Open Areas Protected from Development

9.27 Open and undeveloped areas within settlements can be an important element of the character and environmental quality of settlements by enhancing the setting of building groups, adding to a sense of place or identity, or helping to retain links with surrounding countryside. In some case areas which have cherished qualities are excluded from development boundaries, but Policy BE7 below is intended to provide protection to those identified areas which lie within the developed areas of certain settlements.

POLICY BE7
The following areas of open land are considered to make an important contribution to environmental quality and sense of place in their respective settlements therefore, development which would be harmful to their open character will not be permitted:

Biddisham Land south west of The Old Rectory
Brent Knoll The Glebe Field, Church Lane
Cannington Brook area
Cattcott Land north of St Peter’s Church
Chilton Trinity Land south west of the Holy Trinity Church
East Brent Village Green at Brent Road
Edington Land rear of Holywell Road and Broadmead Lane
Shapwick Land between Manor House and St Mary’s Church
Local Materials

9.28 Whilst the Local Plan is determined to promote the most locally distinctive forms of new development, it is recognised that there is often particular concern as to the type of materials used for construction. Whilst the type of materials is only one aspect of local distinctiveness, Policy BE8 below is specifically intended to secure the use of characteristic local materials.

9.29 The geography and geology of the Plan area is extensive and varied and this is reflected in the range of construction materials used. Many of the rural settlements, particularly in the older core areas, retain a distinctive local character by use of indigenous construction materials such as, the grey lias stone of the Polden villages or the rich red sandstone of the Quantock villages. The Council is concerned that the individual character of settlements is maintained by the use of natural appropriate materials, wherever possible and particularly for the construction of boundary walls and structures which are often an integral part of the local street or roadside scene. This policy will, therefore help to contribute towards the preparation of Village Design Statements if and when prepared for individual villages.

POLICY BE8
The Council will seek to ensure that indigenous construction materials are employed wherever possible and appropriate, particularly where this is a prominent feature of a locality.

Landscape Design

9.30 The appearance and treatment of the spaces between and around buildings is of equal importance to the design of the buildings themselves. New development should have a spatial and planting structure that reflects and complements the surrounding development. Landscape considerations should therefore, form an integral part of design and layout.

Developments should ensure that existing site assets such as vegetation, topography, water and topsoil are used to best advantage. That the layout has a clearly recognisable structure of useable spaces and planted areas and finally, that types of boundary enclosure, paving and any street furniture are integrated into the overall design.

9.31 Special attention will be required for the landscape design of developments at the periphery of settlements where they meet countryside. This will soften the interface between the landscape and the built development.

POLICY BE9
New development should include appropriate areas of hard and soft landscaping, utilising existing features where possible, to ensure that the local character and biodiversity of the surrounding area is reinforced.

POLICY BE10
Where it is compatible with other policies in the Plan, new development at the edge of a settlement should be carefully designed and landscaped, so as to enhance the character and appearance of both the built-up area and the adjoining countryside.

Planting and Soft Landscaping

9.32 New development, particularly where there is little or no existing vegetation can appear starkly at variance with its setting for a substantial period of time. New planting helps to soften the immediate impact of the development and helps to enhance the immediate surroundings in terms of its appearance and nature conservation value. It is essential that planting schemes are prepared as an integral part of development and considered at an early stage in preparing a planning application.

9.33 It is vital that detailed planning applications provide sufficient information to enable an assessment of the proposed scheme. The design should take advantage of attractive features and the landscaping should be of an appropriate form, location and quantity. Areas set aside for planting should be free of underground services.

9.34 Planning permission will be refused where trees or hedgerows of good quality, landscape or wildlife significance would not be retained.
POLICY BE11
Where appropriate, development proposals should include planting schemes. These should include details of plant species, size and density and should use predominantly native plant species. Where possible, schemes should aim to conserve or enhance locally important biodiversity. Conditions will normally be attached to planning permissions to secure the early implementation and adequate maintenance of approved planting schemes.

Public Art

9.35 The Council has, for a number of years, informally operated a policy for promoting and securing public art in the District. It is intended to raise the profile of art provision in a wide variety of forms to enhance the quality of development, enrich the built environment and provide opportunities, particularly for local artists and trades, to add to the quality of life in Sedgemoor for residents and visitors.

9.36 The provision of art is based on the "per cent for art" concept promoted by the Arts Council and is most likely to be achieved in association with new development (public and private) and whilst a range of work may be considered it could encompass:

- "traditional" or abstract sculpture in a range of materials and subjects;
- provision of space for artistic use;
- provision of gates, arches, seating, bridges;
- specialist treatment of some aspects of a building - stained glasswork, railings, mosaics, floor/wall design, lighting, timberwork etc; and
- major landmark or urban design features.

9.37 The aim is to ensure that the appropriate artist or craft person is commissioned and that their work is an integral part of the project. We would therefore wish to work in partnership with developers, architects and designers at an early stage of development schemes to identify and work up possibilities for art provision, which could be successfully incorporated into the project. The means of provision and its funding or maintenance would be a matter for detailed discussion.

9.38 Experience from similar schemes elsewhere strongly suggests that this approach can produce a more rewarding development, not only for the developer but for its longer term users, whether this involves public or private space. Art within development enhances the overall design and commercial attraction and promotes a sense of identity and local distinctiveness. The important element is a positive attitude towards the possibilities which may be identified.

9.39 We recognise that not all proposed developments would be suitable for this partnership approach and would tend to relate to the more significant projects. Nevertheless, the District Council intends to approach the issue in a constructive and positive way and looks to developers for co-operation to achieve what could be long lasting local benefits.

POLICY BE12
The Council will seek to negotiate a contribution of up to one per cent, or agreed cost equivalent, from the total development value for agreed art provision to comprise:

a) specific art provision within or as part of the development, or

b) an agreed art provision in the public realm; or

c) an appropriate financial contribution towards an identified major public art project(s) within the Sedgemoor District.

This policy shall apply to the following forms of development:

a) residential:
   i) new build units of ten units or upwards; and
   ii) significant conversions or refurbishments of existing buildings.

b) significant retail, commercial or leisure proposals; and

c) significant development proposals by utility operators and Local Authorities.
Introduction

10.01 The present environment is the product of countless natural changes, human decisions and endeavours made over thousands of years. The evidence of this history contributes towards an understanding of the evolution of local, social, cultural and economic development.

10.02 Understanding and learning from history has significant tangible benefits to both the national and local economy, as it attracts large numbers of tourists and visitors annually. The South West is renowned for its identity, attractiveness and sense of history. These attributes must be seen as some of the most important local strengths that underpin our future economic prosperity.

10.03 Sedgemoor has some of the country’s most important archaeological remains. The remnants of wooden trackways across the Levels, dating back 3,000 years, have been discovered while there is evidence of prehistoric field systems at Brean Down. Iron Age hillforts were built at Cannington and Brent Knoll 2,500 years ago.

10.04 The Roman era saw significant development within the area, particularly with respect to exploiting the agricultural potential of the Levels and Moors and the mineral potential of the Mendips. The Axe and Parrett Rivers were used to export produce with places like Combwich developing as a port.

10.05 Local markets and settlements expanded throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. At this time, much of our land was either owned by the Crown or the Church. Large estates were developed and a Royal Palace established at Cheddar. Much of the landscape still evident around the Quantocks dates from this period.

10.06 After the Norman Conquest, expansion continued. The Saxon hunting grounds of the Mendips and Quantocks became Royal Forests, while the Levels and Moors became more settled and managed. With the dissolution of the monasteries, large land holdings came under the Crown. This instigated a period of major drainage and land reclamation, creating much of the landscape of roads and fields present today.

10.07 The Industrial Revolution saw the construction of canals, the railway network and the expansion of our urban areas. Generally, the present century has only managed to add detail to what is in effect a landscape of medieval and post medieval character. In consequence, the District is rich in both nationally and locally important archaeological and historical features, including:

- historic landscapes as at Halswell Park, Goathurst;
- the Ancient Woodlands of the Quantock and Mendip Hills;
- Areas of High Archaeological Potential, such as Cheddar, Axbridge, Nether Stowey and Wedmore;
- twelve Conservation Areas, including the outstanding Heritage Settlements of Axbridge, Bridgwater, Lympsham and Nether Stowey;
- numerous Ancient Monuments and over 1,100 Listed Buildings; and
- a wide range of outstanding examples of industrial archaeology and buildings associated with land drainage schemes or traditional industries.

Key Objective

To preserve and enhance Sedgemoor’s historic environment. To ensure that it has a continuing role in distinguishing the District’s unique sense of identity and place, whilst contributing toward its attractiveness as a place to visit and to overall economic prosperity.

Conservation Areas and Outstanding Heritage Settlements

10.08 The Structure Plan through Policies 8-14 firmly recognises the importance of the built heritage of the County and the strong presumption in favour of retaining buildings and areas of architectural or historic interest and character. The core of established control in this respect is through Conservation Area designation and Listed Building control now consolidated into the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Further guidance is contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 ‘Planning and the Historic Environment’ (1994). In accordance with the need to review and assess the potential for Conservation Area designation, several additional areas (at Cannington, Shapwick and Spaxton) were designated in 1991. Conservation Areas are designated by the District Council.
Enhancement of the Built Environment

10.09 The principal statutory controls of Conservation Area designation and Listed Building legislation, whilst ensuring the proper protection of specific buildings, structures and areas, are only part of the necessary commitment to conservation. The content of the legislation also imparts a duty on Local Authorities to encourage the enhancement of historic areas, primarily through the concentration of resources within areas of special character. Local Authorities have an important co-ordinating role to play. They can actively promote environmental schemes and seek a variety of sources of public and possibly private capital to create a long-term commitment to conservation and enhancement. Several major enhancement schemes have already been undertaken within Sedgemoor District, chiefly centred on Conservation Areas and the District Council wishes to see continued commitment towards such schemes.

10.10 Enhancement schemes are a fundamental means by which a Local Planning Authority can fulfil its duty to secure the improvement of Conservation Areas. The channelling of resources to neglected or underused areas as a catalyst to private sector investment and confidence in the longer term is a proven and effective policy. Whilst the structure of potential funding sources has changed significantly in recent years, a major objective in promoting enhancement schemes will be to seek partnership funding from such sources as English Heritage, The Heritage Lottery Fund, The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme and private sources. The priorities of the District Council in promoting such enhancement schemes will be to target areas for physical and economic regeneration, which can be a powerful form of public policy.

10.11 A commitment to enhance the environment around St Mary’s Church was established in the Bridgwater Central Area Local Plan. Extensive repaving and other enhancement works have since been completed within the churchyard. Further enhancement works in St Mary Street would considerably improve the environment of this street, yield greater benefits from the investment already made in this part of the Conservation Area and contribute towards the Bridgwater Town Centre regeneration initiatives. These proposals will require to be considered within the traffic management proposals for the Town Centre. Any proposals for the enhancement scheme for St. Mary Street, Bridgwater will be subject to public consultation. This will include the implications for vehicular access and servicing.

POLICY HE1
New development in a Conservation Area should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the designated area.

10.12 New development outside but adjacent to a Conservation Area, which would affect its setting, should also preserve or enhance that area.

PROPOSAL HE2
An enhancement scheme will be carried out at St Mary Street, Bridgwater, as defined on the Proposals Map.

Demolition within a Conservation Area

10.13 The purpose of Conservation Area designations is to protect areas of special character. There is no standard definition as to what constitutes character and there is certainly no requirement that designated areas should be centred on Listed Buildings, although many are. Proposals involving alterations or demolition of Listed Buildings are controlled through the relevant legislation. However, it is very often the special quality and character of areas which is afforded by the contribution made by trees, materials, groups of buildings and the spaces between them. Conservation Area legislation consequently recognises that demolition of unlisted buildings within Conservation Areas can have a dramatic effect upon character. It is therefore, a requirement that Conservation Area Consent is needed for most demolition proposals within designated areas. The Local Plan will have full regard to the operation and interpretation of this legislation.

10.14 Policy HE3 is intended to safeguard those buildings which make a contribution to the character of a Conservation Area, having regard to the age and condition of the building and the nature and desirability of redevelopment proposals. Where redevelopment is acceptable, the Council may require to be satisfied that the scheme will proceed before granting Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of the existing structure. The District Council has secured funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a major Townscape Heritage Initiative for Bridgwater Town Centre.
10.15 The legislation as defined does not specifically include control over alterations to unlisted buildings in Conservation Areas (unless planning permission is required). Some alterations, however, can have a very damaging impact upon character of the buildings and area (such as unsympathetic changes to roof materials, alterations to windows, painting of stone or brick walls, etc). Where such problems are identified the District Council will consider exercising its power to make Article 4 Directions to remove defined categories or permitted development.

**POLICY HE3**

**Proposals involving demolition of unlisted buildings in a Conservation Area will only be permitted if all the following criteria are met:**

a) the structure to be demolished makes no positive contribution to, or has an adverse impact upon, the character or appearance of the area;

b) redevelopment proposals for the site provide for the preservation and/or enhancement of the character, appearance and setting of the Conservation Area; and

c) having regard to a) and b), a contract has been let for the construction of the replacement structure.

**Development Proposals in Conservation Areas**

10.16 Conservation Area designation in itself does not preclude new development or change carried out in a sensitive and appropriate manner. Nor does designation imply that new development is undesirable, although it is expected that new buildings and structures should positively enhance the character or setting of the Conservation Area. There are no pre-determined design approaches which can be prescribed for new forms of development. What may be appropriate on a particular site may be wholly undesirable on another, even within the same Conservation Area. It is therefore important, that careful consideration is given to architectural solutions whether or not in conjunction with demolition proposals.

10.17 The most important consideration is the impact of the development proposal on the character and setting of the Conservation Area. The factors which will comprise the context to the site and the wider area will vary between different sites in the same Conservation Area and of course, between Conservation Areas. Policy HE4 below is, therefore intended to provide guidance for the consideration of all new development proposals in Conservation Areas and will be operated in association with Policy BE1 relating to Design Statements.

10.18 All development proposals within or affecting a Conservation Area will merit particularly detailed scrutiny. The District Council will encourage the submission of ‘full’ planning applications rather than applications in ‘outline’ form. Where an applicant is seeking to establish the principle of development the District Council is likely to require the submission of substantially more detailed information than might normally be necessary. Such outline applications may be refused if there is insufficient information to satisfy the Local Planning Authority that the proposal will not adversely affect the character of the Conservation Area.

10.19 The District Council has published an appraisal and audit of Sedgemoor’s Conservation Areas ("The Conservation Areas of Sedgemoor"1993).

**POLICY HE4**

**Proposals for development in Conservation Areas (and those outside an area which would affect its setting) will only be permitted if all the following criteria are met:**

a) the proposal’s scale, form, materials and detailing respects the character of the built context of the site;

b) the proposed plot coverage is in keeping with the site’s surroundings;

c) significant boundaries, open spaces, trees and other landscape features, and other details which contribute positively to the character, townscape or historic interest of the area are identified, retained or enhanced; and

d) important views within, into or out of the area are protected or enhanced.

**Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest**

10.20 The statutory lists of buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (compiled by the Secretary of State) are the cornerstone of
government policy for the protection of historic buildings. Following the national re-survey in the 1980’s the total of Listed Buildings in the District now exceeds 1,100.

10.21 The fundamental concern of national and local planning policy is to protect and maintain the stock of historic buildings, to encourage their repair and to make further funds available towards the costs of necessary repairs and restoration. In conjunction with other conservation policies, environmental and enhancement schemes, the achievement of conservation objectives can be a significant source of tourist revenue and local economic development.

Retention of Listed Buildings

10.22 The above policy is essentially aimed at Listed Buildings. It has been the practice of the District Council for several years to make funds available with which, to assist repair and restoration work to historic buildings when resources permit. Established criteria exists for determining priorities for assistance amongst competing claims relating to the historic/architectural qualities of the building and the likelihood of repairs being undertaken without the use of public funds. Assistance is normally subject to the property being in residential use. It is also subject to a financial means test. Wherever appropriate, the District Council will also guide owners to other possible sources of financial assistance and advice such as the County Council and English Heritage.

10.23 In the event of a Listed Building of acknowledged quality falling into disrepair, with little prospect of restoration being undertaken, the District Council can serve a Repairs Notice which, may lead to the building being brought into public ownership for the purposes of achieving adequate repairs. The Council will also cooperate, as necessary, with other restoration agencies such as the Somerset Historic Buildings Preservation Trust. Particularly where this might secure a future for an important building at risk and help contribute towards enhancing an area of denuded townscape or assist economic regeneration objectives.

POLICY HE5
The repair and conservation of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest will be encouraged.

Change of Use of a Listed Building

10.24 Whilst the majority of Listed Buildings in the District are in residential use, there are often pressures to change their existing use either wholly or partly. This is often so in the historic cores of settlements (particularly Town Centres), where there are changing commercial pressures. The Council recognises the need for buildings to adapt to different local circumstances and economic uses. The essential consideration is to ensure that Listed Buildings are well maintained and repaired thus preserving their architectural and historic interest. Given other policies of the Local Plan, for the location of various uses, the Council attempts to be as flexible as possible in permitting changes of use to Listed Buildings. Although the original uses are very often the most appropriate. However, there must be a particular regard to proposed physical alterations relative to the architectural integrity of the building.

10.25 Applications should incorporate details of all proposed alterations to the building (internally and externally and to its curtilage) to demonstrate their effect on its appearance, character and setting.

POLICY HE6
A change to an alternative, appropriate use of part, or the whole, of a Listed Building will be permitted if its character and features of architectural or historic interest would be preserved, enhanced or restored.

Extension or Alteration of a Listed Building

10.26 Alterations which would affect the character or appearance of a Listed Building require the prior grant of Listed Building Consent. Even relatively minor but insensitive works can severely damage the historical or architectural integrity of a building or structure. In considering applications involving alterations or conversion of Listed Buildings, the Local Planning Authority will need to be satisfied that proposals accord with the general guidance of Structure Plan Policy 9 and PPG15. This requires development proposals to protect the setting, character or appearance of all Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

10.27 In some circumstances, proposed alterations to a Listed Building may involve a complex package of measures. In order to fully assess the impact of the proposals, the Council may require the
preparation of a building appraisal. This will need to demonstrate how the detailed physical proposals address the character of the building and contribute towards its special architectural or historic interest.

**POLICY HE7**

Development involving proposals to extend or alter a Listed Building (or part of a building) internally or externally, will not be permitted unless:

a) it would preserve or enhance the character and setting of the building or a Conservation Area;

b) it would preserve any features of special architectural or historic interest;

c) it is sympathetic in design, historic form, scale and materials with other parts of the building.

In appropriate cases, the District Council will require the recording of features of interest that would be destroyed in the course of works for which consent is being sought.

**Demolition of Listed Buildings**

10.28 The policy stance relating to demolition proposals for Listed Buildings is clear and straightforward. There is a firm presumption in favour of retention of a building and the exploration of every possibility for repair, restoration and an appropriate alternative use.

10.29 The policy below sets out the criteria on which applications for demolition will be determined. Where consent is granted for the demolition of a Listed Building owners are required, under the relevant legislation, to make provision for the prior recording of the building or structure.

**POLICY HE8**

There is a presumption in favour of the preservation of buildings listed as being of special architectural or historic interest. Consent for demolition will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, having regard to:

a) structural condition;

b) physical and financial feasibility of repair and economic reuse;

c) satisfactory evidence of attempts at disposal on the open market where appropriate;

d) the importance of the building in terms of architectural merit, setting and historic interest;

e) the acceptability of redevelopment proposals for the site; and

f) circumstances where major benefits can be demonstrated that cannot be provided by other means;

g) in appropriate cases the District Council will require the recording of features of interest that would be destroyed in the course of work, for which consent is being sought.

The District Council will exercise, where appropriate, its power to impose a condition on Listed Building Consents to prevent their implementation until a contract has been let for the approved replacement structure.

**Archaeology**

10.30 The District has a wealth of archaeological areas and buildings. Many of these sites are of national importance and some are protected as Scheduled Monuments where the issue of development is a matter for the Secretary of State (in consultation with the Local Planning Authority). Scheduled Monuments notified at the time of preparation of the plan are indicated on the Proposals Map.

**Archaeological Sites of National Importance**

10.31 Archaeological remains are irreplaceable and PPG16 (Archaeology and Planning) advises that where development proposals would affect nationally important remains, whether scheduled or not, there will be a presumption in favour of the physical preservation of the remains. However, applications will be weighed against the national need for, or importance of, the proposed development.

10.32 In cases where development is permitted, mitigation strategies through the application of appropriate conditions on planning consent will be carried out. The mitigation strategy will cover preservation of the remains in situ or, where this
is not possible, the recording or excavation of the site before the commencement of and/or during, building works.

**POLICY HE11**

There will be a presumption in favour of preservation in situ of nationally important archaeological sites, whether scheduled or not. Planning permission will not be granted for development that would damage or destroy these sites or their settings unless the importance of the proposed development outweighs the national significance of the remains. In that event, mitigation strategies should be in place for the protection and recording of the site.

**Other Archaeological Sites and Areas**

**10.33** Archaeological sites that are not identified as nationally important also require protection from development. Such locally important sites include sites of county importance and often lie within areas of high archaeological potential, both of which are shown on the proposals map. Known sites are listed in the Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by the County Council. Knowledge of the relative importance of the sites recorded in the HER and the definition of their boundaries is often imperfect. Furthermore, the sites are so numerous that it would not be practicable to show them on the Proposals Maps, other than in a generalised manner. Developers should consult the County Archaeologist for further and updated information.

**10.34** Areas of High Archaeological Potential are shown on the Proposals Map and cover areas where archaeological remains are likely but have not yet been identified. Most of these cover the historic cores of settlements.

**10.35** It is important to ensure that, where development is proposed on these sites and in these areas, a sufficiently detailed analysis is undertaken to determine the presence, nature and character of remains. The County Archaeologist can advise on the need and nature of this work which shall be carried out by the developer.

**POLICY HE9**

Where development proposals will affect Areas of High Archaeological Potential and elsewhere where there is reason to believe that there may be archaeological remains, an assessment of the nature, character and importance of the site will be sought prior to the determination of any planning application.

**10.36** As with sites of national importance, preservation of locally important sites will be the preferred option when considering applications that could affect them. However, the importance of the development should be weighed against the local significance of the remains and the amount of damage to be caused. If planning permission is granted it will be conditional on the developer to provide appropriate archaeological excavation (and/or recording) of those parts of the archaeological remains that will be damaged.

**POLICY HE12**

Planning permission will not be granted for development which would damage or destroy locally important archaeological remains, unless the importance of the development outweighs the local significance of the remains. Where physical preservation in situ is not possible, mitigation strategies will be required for the protection and/or recording of the site.

**Management and Interpretation of Archaeological Sites**

**10.37** The development of facilities that promote understanding, interest and interpretation of local archaeology is an important part of the overall protection and enhancement of the history and culture of the District. There is considerable scope to provide for the development of further interpretation at selected archaeological sites. This would add to the educational and recreational resources of the area for the benefit of residents and visitors. The County Council has already carried out or been involved in a number of schemes of archaeological rescue and interpretation throughout the County including, industrial artefacts and buildings. Where possible the District Council will assist in the promotion of appropriate projects in liaison with the County Council (Somerset Heritage), the Somerset Industrial and Archaeological Society and other bodies with similar interests.

**POLICY HE13**

Where development is proposed in the vicinity of important archaeological sites, consideration should be given to the promotion of schemes for their management, interpretation and public access.
Historic Landscapes

10.38 To some extent, many parts of the landscape of the District are of historic significance and the approach of the Local Plan will generally be to strictly control development to that which, justifies an appropriate countryside location. Consideration of all proposals will be informed by the District Landscape Assessment that is partly intended to promote necessary development which, is locally distinctive to its context and at the same time protects and enhances landscape character.

10.39 In addition, the District currently contains two areas registered by English Heritage as areas of historic landscape at:

a) Goathurst: Halswell Park (Historic Park and Garden); and
b) Westonzoyland: Site of Battle of Sedgemoor (Historic Battlefield).

These sites are of national importance as historic landscapes and Policy 10 of the Somerset Structure Plan requires that, development proposals which affect these two sites should take account of their impact on the character of the landscape. In addition, because of the particular importance of these sites, it is proposed that more detailed policy protection be provided in the Local Plan.

10.40 It is not anticipated that additional historic landscape notifications will be made during the Plan period, but this policy would also apply to any possible future registrations. Also, whilst designation can take place outside the Local Plan process, the Council will consider, (in consultation with English Heritage) Conservation Area status for Halswell Park.

10.41 During the life of the Plan the County Council, in conjunction with English Heritage, will be carrying out a Historic Landscape Assessment of the county. This survey will identify and characterise the principal components of the historic landscape of Sedgemoor.

POLICY HE10
Development which would harm the historic structure, character, principal components or setting of historic landscapes, parks and gardens and battlefields on the English Heritage Register and of local interest will not be permitted.
Introduction

11.01 Modern day leisure pursuits cover a wide variety of activities and impinge on many different types of location, both urban and rural.

11.02 The quality and availability of recreation and leisure facilities is essential to “quality of life”. Parks, play areas, playing fields, sports centres and swimming pools are important facilities. Enjoyment of the countryside and coast for a range of recreational and sporting activities is vital for many people. In addition to the area’s resident population, holidaymakers clearly place demand on such facilities.

11.03 Trends in tourism have changed as new types of activity, new attractions and new destinations become popular. Tourism business includes accommodation, catering, transport, tourist attractions and all the other amenities and facilities designed to cater for the needs of visitors. There is also an overlap with related areas such as shopping, sport, entertainment, the arts and other recreation and leisure activities. Tourist expenditure in Britain totals around £37 billion, including about £5 billion spent by domestic day visitors.

11.04 Tourism is a significant component of Sedgemoor’s economy, accounting for about 14% of local employment. It embraces not just holiday making but all other forms of visit, such as business conferences and special events.

11.05 The West Country Tourist Board is attempting to increase the level of visitor business in the winter, spring and late autumn. This would not only help to consolidate and stabilise the benefits of tourism for the local economy but also helps to justify investment in facilities.

11.06 It is estimated that about 3 million visitor nights are spent in Sedgemoor each year. This represents 35% of the County total and is dominated by the caravan, camping and holiday centres of the Brean, Berrow and Burnham-on-Sea coastal area. There are about 35,000 visitors in this area at peak season.

11.07 Cheddar is another important tourist destination, both for staying visitors and day visitors. Sedgemoor’s tourism business is fundamentally dependent on natural environmental assets (sandy beaches, Cheddar Gorge, attractive countryside) and accessibility. The Plan will have an important role in safeguarding such assets.

The area’s potential to develop a “green tourism” profile (such as low impact holidays based on walking, cycling and bird watching) should be exploited.

Key Objective

To promote forms of recreational and leisure pursuits together with a range and mix of facilities, which provide opportunities for both local people and visitors to pursue their interests; which support local culture, heritage and economic development; without harming our unique environmental assets and where possible contribute to reducing the need to travel by car.

Our specific objective for sport and recreation is to ensure that adequate land and water resources are available both for organised sport and for informal recreation, by:

a) protecting open space and other land with recreational value; and

b) making proposals for additional sport, recreation and open space provision where needed.

In planning for sustainable tourism development the objective is to foster development and enhancement of tourism facilities in the District while at the same time protecting and enhancing the natural environment and man-made heritage.

Protection of Recreational Open Space

11.08 The Local Plan seeks to resist the loss of existing recreational open space. Land to be protected includes:

a) outdoor sports facilities (playing fields, sports grounds, tennis courts etc) including not only Local Authority sites but also private and education sector sites if the facilities are available for public use, whether through a membership scheme or otherwise.

b) children’s playing space (equipped play grounds, kick-about areas and other play areas); and

c) other public open space and recreation sites, including ornamental parks/gardens, allotments, village greens and fishing lakes.
Recreation, Leisure and Tourism

Chapter 11

11.09 To aid interpretation of this Policy most of these sites are identified on the Proposals Map, using information derived from District Council sources and a survey of Parish Councils. Further details of the survey are set out in a Local Plan Background Paper “Review of Playing Fields, Play areas and Open Spaces.”

11.10 Sites in categories (a) and (b) above are directly relevant to the assessment of outdoor playing space against the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) “Six Acre Standard” which recommends that a minimum of 2.4 hectares (6.0 acres) per 1,000 population should be available. The NPFA guidance further recommends that this should be comprised of 1.6 hectares (4 acres) for outdoor sport and 0.8 hectares (2 acres) for Children’s Playing Space. Existing provision in Sedgemoor Parishes is summarised at Appendix 11.1.

11.11 The NPFA defines outdoor playing space as: “space which is available for sport, active recreation or children’s play, which is of suitable size and nature for its intended purpose, safely accessible and available to the general public”. This definition excludes such things as:

- golf facilities;
- indoor sports or leisure centres;
- water used for recreation; and
- verges, woodlands, commons, ornamental parks and gardens.

11.12 These types of facility or open space cannot be regarded as substitutes for elements of the NPFA standard, but make a valuable contribution to the total recreational provision of communities in the area. Their availability may be particularly relevant as a mitigating circumstance if there is a local deficiency of outdoor playing space.

11.13 This Local Plan Policy seeks to safeguard the existing levels of outdoor playing space. Separate proposals aim to address specific deficiencies.

11.14 In accordance with legislation, the District Council will consult the English Sports Council as statutory consultees on any application that is on land which has been:

a) used as a playing field (a site of at least 0.4 hectares encompassing at least one playing pitch) at any time in the five years before the application and which remains undeveloped; or

b) allocated for use as a playing field in the Local Plan; or

c) involves the replacement of the surface of the grass playing pitch with a synthetic pitch.

POLICY RLT1 Development which would result in the loss of recreational open space will not be permitted unless:

a) the existing sports and recreation facilities can best be retained and enhanced through the redevelopment of a small part of the site; or

b) a replacement facility of equivalent sports and/or recreation benefit is made available; or

c) the proposed development provides sports and/or recreation facilities of greater benefit than the long-term recreational value of the open space that would be lost.

Provision of Outdoor Playing Space for Children in Association with New Residential Development

11.15 The Local Plan seeks to provide outdoor play space based on the recommendations of the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) which call for the provision of different types of play areas for a range of age groups. Chapter 4 (pages 19-37) of the NPFA publication “The Six Acre Standard: Minimum Standards for Outdoor Playing Space (2001)” provides detailed and illustrated guidance on the siting, accessibility, content and layout of such sites. A summary including the definition of ‘LAP’, ‘LEAP’ and ‘NEAP’ is set out at Appendix 11.2.

11.16 The Local Plan Policy on “Outdoor Playing Space for Children” is intended to ensure that all new residential developments meet the NPFA minimum standards so that the successive generations of children have adequate opportunities for outdoor play. As settlements grow it is important to maintain:

a) an appropriate total amount of playspace land; and

b) appropriate local accessibility.
11.17 The developers of new sites cannot be required to make good any existing local deficiencies of playspace provision but they will be required to meet needs arising from their development. In overall terms the NPFA “Six Acre Standard” recommends that there should be 0.8 hectares of playspace per 1,000 population; this can be translated to a need to ensure that for every new house built, 20m² of new playspace is created. Where possible the Council will expect this provision to be made on-site by the developer, together with provision of appropriate equipment, landscaping and commuted sums to cover future maintenance. NPFA guidance suggests that a LAP should be provided on any development of 15 (or more) houses and a LEAP will be needed on sites of 50 (or more) houses. Provision of a NEAP will usually be off-site but contributions to the cost of establishing such a facility will be required.

11.18 In practice this could, for example, mean that a developer proposing to build 30 houses will provide a LAP on site (which directly contributes around 100m² to the stock of playspace) and meet the balance of the 600m² additional space the development needs by financial contribution to a fund for land acquisition and creation of LEAP and NEAP facilities elsewhere in the neighbourhood.

POLICY RLT2
All new housing which can potentially be occupied by households with children should include appropriate provision for children’s outdoor playing space. In determining the form of facilities to be provided, account will be taken of the nature of existing facilities in the vicinity but provision should normally be to the following standards:

a) increase the stock of children’s play space at a rate of 20 square metres per new dwelling; and

b) in the case for a site for 15 or more dwellings, a suitable range of play spaces should be equipped and accessible as follows:

i) all new houses to be within 100 metres of a “Local Area for Play” (LAP); and

ii) all new houses to be within 400 metres of a “Local Equipped Area for Play” (LEAP); and

iii) all new houses to be within 1000 metres of a “Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP).

Where the requirement for play space cannot be fully met on site, the developer will be expected to make provision for appropriate new or improved off-site facilities.

Provision of Outdoor Sport Facilities in Conjunction with New Residential Development

11.19 The Local Plan seeks to provide outdoor sports facilities based on the recommendations of the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) as set out in their 2001 publication “The Six Acre Standard: Minimum Standards for Outdoor Playing Space”. The NPFA recommend that outdoor playing space for sport should be to a minimum standard of 1.6 hectares per 1,000 population. This translates to a need to ensure that for every new house built, 40m² of extra land for outdoor sports facilities should be found (calculation assumes average household size of 2.5 persons).

11.20 The NPFA expect their minimum standard to serve as a target when assessing the adequacy of existing sports provision. The results of our parish-by-parish assessment are summarised at Appendix 11.1, Table 1. The developers of new sites cannot be required to make good any existing local deficiencies, but it is clear that all new development will add incrementally to the demands placed on existing facilities for youth and adult use. The most widespread facilities are football, rugby, cricket and hockey pitches, tennis courts and bowling greens. Archery, athletics tracks and training grounds etc are also relevant but golf courses are not eligible for inclusion. The NPFA recognise that there is no precise way of predicting the sporting and physical recreation preferences and choices of those who will move into new developments. However, the clear purpose of setting a minimum standard is to ensure that the stock of land available for sport at the local level increases, if settlements are expanding.

11.21 In the case of large development sites it may be appropriate that the space for outdoor sport is provided on-site, perhaps as an element of a local park, but in most instances the provision will be off-site. A developer may be able to fulfil his obligation by providing a suitable site or alternatively will be required to pay money into
11.22 In some areas the Local Plan has identified and allocated a preferred site. In other localities, where a suitable field for future outdoor sports use, could conceivably be found, at any one of several locations, no specific allocation is made in the Local Plan.

**POLICY RLT3**

*All new housing developments will normally be expected to contribute towards the provision of outdoor sites for sport at a rate of 40 square metres per dwelling. In determining the nature of the provision required, account will be taken of the type of dwellings proposed and the quantity and quality of existing outdoor sports provision in the area.*

### Proposals for Public Open Space and Outdoor Sports

#### Land Between Wembdon and the Bridgwater Northern Distributor Road

11.23 This land is a major segment of the “green wedge” separating Wembdon and Bridgwater, which was originally identified when the Bridgwater Northern Distributor Road Development Guide was adopted in 1982. There have previously been no specific proposals for the area, the expectation simply being that the land would remain in agricultural use.

11.24 In circumstances where Bridgwater is already under-provided with outdoor sports pitches, and where new development in the vicinity of this area will increase demands for such facilities and give rise to significant demands for informal open space and play areas, the Council consider that this land is particularly appropriate for future use as playing fields and other public open space. Such uses are entirely appropriate in the ‘green wedge’. (Policy CNE4).

11.25 Wembdon Cricket Club, who currently lease a County Council owned site at Chilton Trinity, are known to be particularly interested in the possibility of establishing a new ground in this area. A submission on behalf of the club in response to the Local Plan Issues consultation paper (1998) identified the largest field in this area (immediately east of the existing Wembdon playing field) as being ideally suited, (as it is level), can accommodate a cricket ground with a 55 yard boundary and would have the parish church as a splendid backdrop. The Council entirely agree with this view. The next field adjoining to the east is large enough to accommodate a football pitch. Fields to the east again lie adjacent to Crowpill Path (which is a well-used local footpath and also forms part of the longer-distance “Parrett Trail”) have significant trees on two of their boundaries and will be well suited to serve as general purpose public open space to meet the needs of future residents.

11.26 Land to the south of the suggested cricket ground is crossed by two public footpaths and can be wet in places. It is not particularly suitable for sports pitches but could provide a mix of equipped and informal play areas, dog exercise areas and nature areas. A major tree planting scheme along the edge of the Northern Distributor Road through the whole of this area will reinforce the function of the “green wedge”.

**PROPOSAL RLT4**

*Land between Wembdon and the Bridgwater Northern Distributor Road is allocated for public open space and outdoor sports (10 hectares, as defined on the Proposals Map).*

#### Land at College Way, Bridgwater

11.27 This land is part of a former landfill site which is now grassed over and available for informal recreation. The District Council owns the site. It represents a major opportunity to create a new local park, which will meet the recreational needs of residents in the Bath Road area and enhance the approach to Bridgwater College.

11.28 It is proposed that an avenue of trees will be planted on the College Way frontage. The park will include other tree and shrub planting, surfaced paths, seating, children’s play equipment and a large kickabout area. There is also potential to create a new access point at the northern corner of the site which would open up a cycle track opportunity and the possibility of vehicular rear access to numbers 100-134 Bath Road.

**PROPOSAL RLT5**

*Land at College Way, Bridgwater is allocated for public open space (1.27 hectares, as defined on the Proposals Map).*
Land between Stoddens Road and Brent Broad, Burnham-on-Sea

11.29 This land is adjacent to the established Burnham Association of Sports Clubs (BASC) sports ground. The Association’s aspirations to extend the facility have been constrained by the “protected roadline” for the possible northwards extension of the “Eastern Distributor Road”; their planning application for a proposal involving a 16.9 hectare site (bounded by Crooked Lane to the east) had to be refused because of this constraint.

11.30 There is a current shortfall of about 6 hectares of land for outdoor sports at Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge when assessed against National Playing Fields Association standards. The allocated site is contained by the road line and amounts to a little over 8 hectares. However, the safeguarded road line was deleted at the Local Plan Modifications stage and there is now potential for recreation use to be permitted on additional land in this area.

PROPOSAL RLT6
Land between Stoddens Road and Brent Broad, Burnham-on-Sea is allocated for recreation use (outdoor sports grounds). (8.26 hectares, as defined on the Proposals Map).

Land between the Leisure Centre and the River Yeo at Cheddar

11.31 This land is the western edge of a field which is allocated for the extension of the Kings of Wessex School playing fields (Proposal PCS11b). Its primary purpose will be to provide a green corridor for an important cycle track/footpath link. The route will not only serve local journeys but will also be a link in a wider National Cycle Network route between Clevedon and Shepton Mallet. Tree planting and the provision of seating in this area would create an attractive amenity, with fine views towards the church. This will be available for all to enjoy but has a particular advantage of being accessible from nearby employment sites at lunchtime.

PROPOSAL RLT8
Land between the Leisure Centre and the River Yeo at Cheddar is allocated for public open space (0.55 hectares, as defined on the Proposals Map).

Land adjacent to the Existing Red Road Playing Field and Village Hall at Berrow

11.33 The existing sports facilities at Berrow (junior and adult football pitches, cricket and archery) are already heavily utilised by local clubs who draw membership from within and beyond Berrow Parish. The Parish Council is keen to provide additional pitches and replace temporary changing facilities and toilets with a purpose-built facility.

11.34 This 1.74 hectare field adjacent to the existing playing fields is of an appropriate size. It has the particular advantage of also being adjacent to the existing village hall, a building which is potentially extendable to create changing rooms, that would have access to existing social facilities. At present the village hall is separated from the existing playing fields by the allocated site.

PROPOSAL RLT10
Land adjacent to the existing Red Road Playing Field and Village Hall at Berrow is allocated for playing field development (1.74 hectares, as defined on the Proposals Map).

Land at Church Road, Brean

11.35 This proposal is carried forward from the Burnham-on-Sea Area Local Plan but on a reduced site, taking account of the fact that land immediately north of the church is now a car park. The Parish Council intend to provide a recreation area to meet the needs of the village, including seating, play equipment, a ball games area and tree planting.

PROPOSAL RLT19
Land adjacent to St Bridget’s Church, Church Road, Brean is allocated for public open space (1.00 hectare, as defined on the Proposals Map).
Golf Courses

11.36 There are five existing golf courses in the District and the Council’s Sports and Recreation Strategy (1994) identified the potential need for one more. Planning permissions have previously been granted for two new courses. Golf course proposals can raise a range of planning issues; detailed advice on assessing impact and on design principles is available in publications such as “Golf Courses in the Countryside” an advisory booklet published by the Countryside Commission (now the Countryside Agency) in 1993. Any future proposals in the District will be expected to have regard to such guidance and to landscape, nature conservation, transport accessibility, rights of way and other relevant policies in the Local Plan.

Countryside Recreation: Access

11.37 It is important to ensure that existing opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy the countryside are protected and where appropriate are enhanced.

11.38 Access to the countryside for a range of informal recreational activities is an important element of quality of life for many people. This can take many forms - walking, cycling, horse riding, touring by car, picnicking; it might/might not have a specific additional objective (e.g. bird watching, visit a particular place or viewpoint) and might be regular (e.g. walking a dog) or relatively infrequent (e.g. a Sunday outing or summer picnic).

11.39 Within the District there is a substantial range of opportunities for countryside recreation, including not only the public rights of way network but also some extensive areas of National Trust land with open public access, Forestry Commission trails and the beaches.

11.40 There are two recognised long distance footpaths which pass through the District - the “West Mendip Way” and the “Parrett Trail” - and there are several significant proposals for recreational cycle routes. One of the National Cycle Network “Millennium Routes” - Bristol to Padstow - passes through the southern half of the District and there are two other proposals for arterial routes which Somerset County Council is, in conjunction with neighbouring authorities, implementing as additional elements of the National Cycle Network - a ‘coast to coast’ route from Weston-super-Mare to Seaton and a ‘Cheddar Valley Line’ route from Clevedon to Shepton Mallet. Some of these cycle route proposals pick up suggestions first identified in “Pedal the Levels” a study commissioned by the County Council in 1994 to create a network of cycle routes which would release the potential that exists for cycle-based tourism in the Somerset Levels and Moors.

11.41 Growth of car ownership and car usage have had a variety of impacts on countryside recreation, on the one hand broadening opportunities to those with access to a car, but on the other hand bringing adverse impacts such as:

- increased traffic on country roads making them less attractive and less safe for walking, cycling and horse riding; and
- increased pressure at popular sites (footpath erosion, litter, demand for parking space and other facilities).

11.42 In some instances these sorts of conflicts need active intervention such as traffic management, but another key element of a sustainable approach is to maximise the opportunities available for residents and visitors to enjoy local countryside without using a car. In particular this means that:

a) locally accessible footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes in the vicinity of settlements need to be protected and if possible enhanced; and

b) if built development is allowed and in particular if urban areas expand, existing rights of way should be protected, not simply as access routes, but also as attractive “green corridors” with natural vegetation (grass margins, trees, hedgerows) to ensure that links connecting the existing urban area to adjacent countryside are attractive and pleasant to use.

11.43 Development of any site which is crossed by, or is immediately adjacent to a footpath, bridleway or cycle track will be expected to make proper provision for its continued enjoyment as a public asset. Particular attention should be paid to detail in respect of boundary structures, landscaping and associated spaces.

11.44 Proposals which would involve the closure or diversion of an existing public right of way will not be permitted, unless a suitable alternative route which is of equal or greater convenience and amenity value is made available.
11.45 There are many past examples of developments that have retained a route by merely running it along a gap between property boundaries (such as rear garden fences). Such a minimalist approach tends to create an unfriendly and potentially dangerous environment for users rather than a pleasant walkway and this form of treatment will be discouraged.

11.46 Policy RLT11 will be applicable throughout the District but is likely to be of particular significance in the vicinity of settlements and/or major recreational routes.

POLICY RLT11
The existing public rights of way network will be protected and maintained in order to facilitate public access to the countryside. Additional permissive access routes may also be sought. Development which would adversely affect the recreational or amenity value of a public footpath, bridleway, cycle track or other public right of way will not be permitted unless a suitable alternative route is made available.

New Recreational Walking, Cycling and/or Horse Riding Routes

11.47 In addition to cycle networks proposed in the Town Transport Studies, the County and District Councils are working with neighbouring authorities and other partners such as Sustrans and the Environment Agency to create longer distance recreational routes. Such routes are intended to underpin the development of cycle-based tourism in the County (as outlined in para 11.40 above) and also have an important function as recreational cycling routes offering local residents convenient access to surrounding countryside. These routes are not exclusively off-road and it is intended that they serve not only as a linear route but also open up opportunities for people to enjoy circular routes using relatively quiet country lanes.

11.48 The existing/proposed routes are shown on Figure 11.1. Only those sections of proposed route on land which is not highway and where planning permission may be required are shown on the Proposals Map. We will work with the County Council, Sustrans, Environment Agency and other relevant bodies to ensure these routes are designed and built to provide a safe and attractive network. In all instances it is expected that the routes will be open to walkers and cyclists and provisions will also be made for horse riding if sufficient width is available (e.g. the Cossington-Bawdrip railway cutting is suitable but the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal towpath is not). The routes identified on the Proposals Map reflect those identified at the time of Local Plan preparation but these may be subject to change during the course of detailed project development for environmental, financial or other reasons.

POLICY RLT12
Proposals for development that would prejudice the creation of recreational walking, cycling and/or horse riding routes shown on the Proposals Map will not be permitted.

Any major housing, employment or tourism development proposals in the vicinity of these routes should make appropriate connections in order to facilitate local access.

11.49 The specific sections of route shown on the Proposals Map are:

a) Cheddar - District Boundary at Draycott

This route will extend the existing Cheddar Valley Cycle Path, firstly on a route associated with proposed public open space and new housing development and then along existing droves. Beyond the District Boundary the route will extend to Wells and Shepton Mallet and become a leg of the National Cycle Network. The potential to use the course of the old railway in this area is not available because of bridge and embankment removal and construction of buildings since the railway closed in the 1960s. Being a high-profile visitor destination, with Youth Hostel, campsites and bed and breakfast accommodation, Cheddar is seen as an important node on this route and the broader “Pedal the Levels” network.

b) Burnham-on-Sea - West Huntspill

This route forms part of the coast-to-coast route from Clevedon to Seaton which is a leg of the National Cycle Network. It is also the western section of the revised “Spine Route” for the Pedal the Levels project, linking inland to Glastonbury. Use of the promenade at Burnham-on-Sea will require removal of current “no cycling” restrictions, but in principle there is no reason why shared use by pedestrians and cyclists should pose a problem and has the advantage of sea...
views that are not available from the alternative on-road route on South Esplanade. The route continues on the north bank of the River Brue into Highbridge where proposed redevelopment of the boatyard and other land west of Newtown Road, Highbridge (Proposal H17) will create the opportunity of a direct link across to the Clyce Bridge. Connections into Highbridge and the railway station are also important. Out of Highbridge the route was originally intended to be on the sea defence embankment and the existing private access road along the Huntspill River to Sloway Bridge, but an alternative route away from sensitive estuarine habitats is being sought.

c) West Huntspill - Shapwick Heath

At Sloway Bridge the coast-to-coast route becomes on-road southwards through Pawlett but the proposed Pedal the Levels Spine Route continues inland on the banks of the Huntspill River. Near Gold Corner and at Burtle the route is briefly on-road and then follows bridleways or droves before joining the former railway line alongside South Drain at Catcott Heath which then, links with the route from Glastonbury which was opened in 1998.

d) Course of old railway near Bason Bridge

The Pedal the Levels Spine Route as originally conceived proposed to make more use of the old railway route between Highbridge and Burtle, but this proved to be impractical. The spine route will be useful not simply as a linear route, but can be used in sections as part of circular routes using local roads. This section of old railway has particular potential in the context of such circuits.

e) Pawlett - Bridgwater

Between Pawlett and Bridgwater the coast-to-coast route is largely on the top of the river flood bank except at Dunball where a deviation via a local drove and the margins of the A38 is necessary in order to avoid the port facilities at Dunball Wharf. Within and near Bridgwater this route also has great potential for journey-to-work trips, particularly if links can be made onto the local road networks of existing and proposed employment sites.

f) Cheddar and Axbridge to Weare

These linked routes on droves, footpaths and riverside land are proposed as a means of linking settlements on the Cheddar Valley Cycle Path with the Isle of Wedmore and the wider Pedal the Levels network avoiding the busy A38 and B3151. A direct link from the existing Cheddar to Axbridge cycleway onto Sharpham Road in Cheddar would be of advantage for local journeys and would also serve to connect to these proposed wider routes.

g) King’s Sedgemoor Drain

A section of the National Cycle Network route between Bridgwater and Glastonbury will run along the bank of King’s Sedgemoor Drain to make the link between country lanes at Bawdrip and Chedzoy. This route also forms part of the Pedal the Levels network.

Horse Riding Schools and Stables

11.50 Horse riding is a popular recreational activity enjoyed by residents and visitors to the area. Many traditional farms have stables which were formerly used by working horses or other suitable buildings at which a riding school might be established. However it is important that such facilities are only established at appropriate and suitable locations. It is also particularly important that riders do not expose themselves or other road users to the avoidable hazards of busy roads. Also, bridleways should not be subject to such intense use as to render them difficult to use by walkers.

11.51 Proposals which utilise existing farm buildings are likely to satisfy criterion b) of this policy and would not raise issues of visual intrusion. Visual impact may become an issue if new buildings are proposed in any countryside location and particularly so within the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Guidelines for Horse-related Development in the Mendip Hills AONB were adopted as supplementary planning guidance in 2004. Policy CNE6 sets out the criteria for new equestrian buildings and regard should also be had to other Local Plan Policies which may be applicable (e.g. CNE7-10, CNE15-16, HE11, RLT11, PCS17).

POLICY RLT13
Riding schools or the keeping of horses for commercial / private recreational purposes will only be permitted if they:

a) have good access to a local network of lanes and bridleways or sufficient other
Figure 11.1
MAJOR RECREATIONAL CYCLE ROUTES

Key

Proposed Cycle Routes
- Off Road
- On Road

Existing Cycle Routes
- Off Road
- On Road
- Railway

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land for riding, all of which can be accessed without riding on or across a main road;

b) can achieve adequate site supervision and security without the need for erection of a new dwelling;

c) provide adequate arrangements for access, turning and parking of cars and trailers; and

d) do not have an unacceptable adverse impact on landscape, local amenity, highway safety, walkers or recognised nature conservation interests.

Commercial Leisure or Entertainment Facilities

11.52 Proposals for new commercial leisure or entertainment facilities (cinema, nightclub, ten-pin bowling, etc) will be considered against the provisions of Local Plan Policies TC6, TC7 and TC8.

11.53 Historically, Town Centres were the chosen location for most commercial leisure facilities, but as with retail development there has been a trend towards out-of-town locations. In conjunction with our strategy seeking to maintain and enhance the viability and vitality of Town Centres, the defined Town Centres will be the preferred location for the development of new commercial leisure facilities. Such locations generally have optimum accessibility on foot or by public transport for the largest number of potential customers and the presence of leisure facilities is an important component of the mix of Town Centre uses. Visitors have convenient access to a range of food and drink outlets and other facilities, an advantage to users and businesses alike, which can contribute to vitality and viability not only during daytime but also into the evenings. Policy TC8 contains sufficient flexibility to allow proposals to be permitted elsewhere in appropriate circumstances. This could apply for example to the extension of an established leisure facility or conversion of a particularly suitable existing building. Major leisure uses on Edge-of-Town Centre sites may be acceptable under the terms of Policies TC7 and TC8.

New Tourist Attractions

11.54 Tourism is a major component of Sedgemoor’s economy and accounts for about 14% of local employment. PPG21 “Tourism” stresses the need for sustainable tourism which contributes to economic growth, but also ensures conservation of the environment. It is clear that this approach must underpin planning policy for tourism development in Sedgemoor. The tourism business is fundamentally dependent upon the natural assets of the District, both in the form of major features such as Cheddar Gorge and vast sandy beaches and also the countryside in more general terms.

11.55 Much of the District is of designated national importance for nature conservation and/or outstanding natural beauty. This limits the scale and nature of new development that can be allowed in these areas, but there is also a duty to protect the countryside in general.

11.56 The scale and nature of potential new visitor attractions could vary enormously, from small scale rural craft centres to major theme parks. In some instances the proposal may have a very specific locational requirement (e.g. access to a particular historic or landscape feature, or association with an established manufacturing site) and in other instances a range of sites might be suitable.

11.57 The purpose of Policy RLT14 is to ensure that any proposed new visitor attraction is assessed in terms of the capacity of that particular location to cope with visitors. Other relevant considerations such as noise and visual impact will be assessed under the terms of other policies and guidance.

11.58 This Council and the County Council are particularly mindful of the opportunities for Somerset to have a strong “green tourism” profile. Attractive landscapes, a wealth of history and heritage (prehistoric remains, places with specific links to King Alfred and the Saxons, historic buildings and sites), distinctive local produce (cider, cheese, wine, wicker goods) and important nature conservation sites of particular importance for bird life. These are amongst some of the ingredients and themes which will underpin the promotion of short breaks. The emphasis here is on developing a network of attractions which are neither intensive nor environmentally damaging, but do allow the visitor to discover and savour the distinctive characteristics of the area.

11.59 The Council recognises the important contribution local public houses, inns and restaurants make to tourism and economic viability. In
many cases they also provide small-scale local visitor accommodation as well as a valuable community facility. Proposals for new or enhanced facilities will therefore be assessed against Policy RLT14 below whilst their retention is addressed under Policy PCS7

**POLICY RLT14**

A proposal for a new or enhanced tourist attraction will be only permitted if all the following criteria are met:

a) it will not lead to increased visitor pressures on such a scale as would harm the natural environment or man-made heritage in the locality;

b) the access roads are suitable for the likely traffic generation;

c) there is sufficient existing or proposed parking space to meet the needs of visitors; and

d) uses that would attract a significant number of people will be accessible by public transport in addition to other forms of transport.

**Cheddar Gorge**

**11.60** Cheddar Gorge is nationally famous as a visitor destination because of the spectacular gorge and caves. Tourism undoubtedly makes an important contribution to the economy of the Cheddar area. However, for many years there have also been concerns about the extent to which the adverse impacts of visitor pressure (traffic congestion, parking difficulties, unsympathetic commercial developments) not only threaten local environmental quality but also impact on visitors’ perceptions and experience of this place. With the exception of parts of the commercialised area at the lower end, Cheddar Gorge lies within the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the undeveloped parts of the Gorge are also an important nature conservation site.

**11.61** The broad aim of the various bodies involved in the management of Cheddar Gorge, the local community and its visitors, is defined in the AONB Management Plan as: “To identify sustainable ways of improving opportunities for the public to enjoy the whole Gorge and tourism business to flourish in the lower Gorge in harmony with the capacity of the natural and built environments to absorb visitors without detriment.”

**11.62** A range of measures has been pursued by the Local Authorities and local landowners (sections of new footway have been provided, HGV traffic has been banned, a programme of scrub clearance and rockfall protection measures has been undertaken, a seasonal park and ride scheme has operated and various minor enhancements have been made). However, concerns persist about car parking, environmental management and visitor satisfaction.

**11.63** The complex and contentious nature of issues in Cheddar Gorge led to the Cheddar Transport Study being broadened to include a more thorough examination of economic and environmental issues. The report of that study, (“Cheddar Gorge and Village Economic and Environmental Appraisal”, LUC, December 1999) includes recommendations on public transport, traffic management, access/parking, land management, enhancement of the built environment, visitor management, promoting existing/new activities, developing attractions, administration/marketing and local consultation. One recommendation of the study is a proposal for a Park and Ride car park but the study also acknowledges that efforts to promote a more effective and permanent Park and Ride may fail, in which case other alternatives will need to be reconsidered.

**11.64** The possibility of creating a three-deck multi-storey car park at the existing Cliff Street car park was rejected in the study because this would provide only an additional 300 spaces, was not favoured in opinion surveys and would have a high capital cost. The District Council consider that a well-designed multi-storey car park at this site would be preferable to the Garston Farm or Lippiatt sites. The site has the clear advantage of being located at a key entry point where there would be an opportunity to provide improved facilities, not only for motorists, but also for coach and bus users by including toilets and a visitor reception centre. Such a scheme would require major capital investment and is only likely to be considered for funding as a component of a strategy, which was enhancing the overall gorge environment by reducing traffic and replacing some or all of the existing parking in the gorge. As a three-deck car park this site could only provide a net increase of around 300 spaces. This would
clearly not be sufficient to directly replace the existing 358 spaces in the middle gorge area or allow for the potential increases in demand arising from longer stay or increased numbers of visitors.

11.65 Consideration of individual commercial development proposals in Cheddar Gorge will be considered against the framework set by Policy RLT14 and other policies in the Local Plan (Built Environment, Shopping (see Policy SH13) Transport, Countryside and Natural Environment) and the Cheddar Gorge Design Guide.

Hotels, Motels and Similar Accommodation

11.66 The application of the principles set out in PPG13 would steer additional major tourist accommodation towards urban areas and seek accessibility by a choice of means of transport. The locations identified at item a) of RLT15, fully comply with this guidance, the other locations specified at items b), c) and d) are considered to be acceptable for the reasons set out below:

b) Motorway Service Areas - despite a rural location and a largely car-based market (some customers could be coach-travellers) it is considered unreasonable to obstruct the potential for motorway travellers to have direct access to accommodation;

c) suitable existing buildings located near a main road (either within villages or possibly outside a defined development boundary) have the potential, within a known tourist area, of meeting the needs/preferences of visitors. Such locations are potentially accessed, not only by car, but also by bus or coach; and

d) as a matter of principle the Council consider that if an existing holiday site operator wishes to invest in a higher standard of accommodation, this a development that Local Plan policy would support. Particularly if this brings opportunities to improve land scaping, design and the overall image of the holiday area at Brean and Berrow.

POLICY RLT15
A proposal for a new or extended hotel, motel or similar tourist accommodation will only be permitted if:

a) it is within Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea, Highbridge or Cheddar; or

b) it is at a motorway service area; or

c) it involves conversion and/or extension of a suitable existing building with good access to the main road network (A38, A39, A361, A370, A371 or A372); or

d) it replaces existing static caravan or chalet accommodation at an established holiday site.

Farm-Based Tourist Accommodation

11.67 Farmhouse bed and breakfast or farm-based holiday accommodation can make good use of otherwise unused farm buildings and help sustain individual farm businesses and local employment in rural areas. A proliferation of tourist development in sensitive locations is not desirable, but small scale farm diversification proposals represent a good opportunity to provide new accommodation unobtrusively. With care it should be possible for such developments to not only have no adverse impact on the landscape but also have the positive advantage of helping develop and sustain “green tourism” - offering visitors close contact with local culture, produce, heritage and environment and the ability to discover and enjoy an area more intimately.

11.68 Proposals for the development of farm-based tourist accommodation will be considered against Policy E8 (Farm Diversification), and Policy CNE3 (Conversion of Rural Buildings). The use of existing buildings will generally be favoured under the terms of the Policy on the conversion of buildings in the countryside (which may allow holiday accommodation where permanent residential use would not be acceptable). If new buildings are proposed they should be sited and designed in such a way as to integrate with existing building groups and local landscape features (topography, trees and hedgerows in particular). Static caravans, chalet or cabin developments may be acceptable, but only if the proposal is for a small number of units, the management of which remains ancillary to the farm business (see Policy RLT16). Providing a site for camping or touring caravans may also be acceptable (see Policy RLT17). Proposals that would be unacceptably prominent in the landscape will be rejected under the provisions of Policies CNE1 or CNE2.
11.69 Planning permission will include conditions to limit the individual occupancy of holiday accommodation and to prevent a subsequent change of use to permanent residential use.

Static Caravans Holiday Chalets or Cabins

11.70 Static caravans and chalets already comprise a major part of the County’s stock of tourist accommodation and there is a particular concentration in Sedgemoor’s coastal strip at Brean, Berrow and Burnham-on-Sea. The quantity and quality of tourist accommodation is largely derived from the operation of market forces, but whilst static caravan sites and chalets provide affordable holidays there is also widespread concern about their landscape impact. This is a particular issue at Brean and Berrow, which has one of the largest concentrations of caravan sites in the country. Some of the particular circumstances of Brean and Berrow are addressed separately in Policy RLT 18. Elsewhere in the District, new development will be subject of strict control with the intention of avoiding adverse affects to the local landscape. In addition to landscape impacts, regard must also be had to matters such as nature conservation sites and flood risk; relevant policies on all these matters are set out in Chapter 8.

POLICY RLT16
Planning permission for new static caravan sites, holiday chalet or holiday cabin developments will only be granted in the following circumstances:

a) the proposal is for a small number of units which are sited unobtrusively i.e. on a site which is well screened from public view by existing trees, hedgerows or buildings and where the proposal would not harm the character or appearance of the countryside; or

b) as part of a comprehensive proposal for upgrading an established holiday site.

In all cases the local highway network must be capable of safely accommodating the traffic generated. Visitors should ideally be able to access the site by bus, on foot or by cycle and there should be adequate sewage disposal facilities.

Within the parishes of Brean and Berrow the additional provisions of Policy RLT18 will also apply.

Camping and Touring Caravan Sites

11.71 Camping and caravanning are a significant element of the British holiday market. Many small scale sites do not require planning permission (Caravan Club etc certification) and many other sites operate as a short-term temporary use of land which again does not require planning permission. This Policy will therefore not be applicable in all circumstances.

11.72 There is a substantial concentration of existing touring caravan and camping sites in the coastal strip at Brean and Berrow, a location which is also host to many static caravan and chalet sites. Whilst it can be argued this coastal area meets demands that would otherwise be putting pressure on more sensitive landscapes, such as the Heritage Coast or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the intensity of holiday sites in this coastal area has despoiled the landscape. This issue is raised separately elsewhere in this Local Plan and is likely to be subject of a separate long-term enhancement strategy. New or extended sites at Brean and Berrow are unlikely to be acceptable except as part of a comprehensive proposal where site operators are proposing significant edge-of-site landscaping and internal amenity improvements for the whole of an existing holiday site (including static caravans).

11.73 There are also major touring caravan and camping sites elsewhere in the District, notably at Edithmead (near M5 junction 22), Cheddar and Fiddington. Any proposals for expansion of these sites or other existing sites will be assessed against this policy.

11.74 Narrow country lanes found in many parts of the District are not particularly suitable for towing caravans and this could be a major limiting factor, particularly in and around the Quantock Hills, where the lanes often become steep and/or ‘sunken’, with limited passing places.

POLICY RLT17
Planning permission for the development of a camping and/or touring caravan site (including proposals to extend an existing site) will not be granted unless:

a) the site is well screened from public view by existing trees, hedgerows or buildings and the proposal would not harm the character or appearance of the countryside;
b) traffic generated by the proposal can be safely accommodated on the local highway network; and

c) adequate drinking water, toilet, shower and washing facilities are provided.

Visitors should ideally be able to access the site by bus, on foot or by cycle. Within the parishes of Brean and Berrow the additional provisions of Policy RLT18 will also apply.

**Improvement of Existing Holiday Sites, Brean and Berrow**

11.75 The coastal area at Brean and Berrow has a massive concentration of holiday accommodation in chalets, static caravans and sites for touring caravans and camping. It is reputedly the second largest such concentration in the country and accommodates approximately 25-30,000 visitors at peak season.

11.76 The wide sandy beaches and sand dunes that underpin the attraction of this location as a holiday destination, are also environments of recognised nature conservation importance. Water supply and sewerage infrastructure in the area was improved in the 1970s. Sections of the Coast Road at Brean have been improved in stages over the past three decades, but the road network feeding into the area from Weston-Super-Mare and the M5 remains largely unimproved.

11.77 In the context of modern planning policies which seek to protect England’s stretches of “undeveloped coastline”, it can be difficult to imagine how development on this scale was allowed. The most significant damage to the natural landscape was done in the 1920s and 30s, when a mix of residential plots and holiday uses started to colonise the narrow belt of sand dunes at Brean. These uses gradually spread and the precedent set in an era before there was any planning control has been difficult to resist in subsequent years. Camping uses on farmland on the east side of the Coast Road had similarly small-scale beginnings, but a post-war holiday camp has been joined by several massive caravan sites.

Despite a general policy of containment, several of the farm-based caravan sites have expanded considerably since the 1960s. Many of the other caravan sites, particularly those in the dunes, are totally confined by property boundaries and cannot expand. Many of the sites are simply fields filled with the maximum number of units which can be accommodated, laid out in regimented rows and devoid of the tree planting which could produce a more attractive site and help foil the site’s impact on the local landscape. This visual impact is evident from many public vantage points - the coast road, footpaths and bridleways and from Brean Down. How these existing problems might be remedied is addressed below, but the main message for the control of new sites is that the Council wants much greater care to be taken to avoid adversely affecting the local landscape.

11.78 The Council’s view is that there is a need for a framework for long-term change at Brean and Berrow. Our starting point is:

a) the area’s infrastructure cannot cope with any significant increase of current peak demands;

b) existing development has adversely affected the local landscape and in particular the views from the public highway and from Brean Down; and

c) there needs to be sufficient flexibility to allow and indeed encourage, existing site operators to improve their holiday sites in response to rising expectations amongst visitors, the standards of competitors and the availability of better equipped caravans and holiday cabins.

There is evidence that the aspirations of many site operators and their customers, are consistent with and complementary to the broader aim of softening the visual impact of these sites in the landscape and improving the environment, both for visitors and residents. Previous policies in the Burnham-on-Sea Area Local Plan set a basically restrictive framework, but also included sufficient flexibility to encourage the upgrading of existing holiday sites. Several major sites have subsequently invested in amenity blocks, fishing lakes, tree planting and other site improvements.

11.79 In the long term the Council consider it is in the best interests of the area’s attractiveness and viability to:

a) seek to negotiate the removal of those existing caravan sites which adversely affect the approach road to Brean Down;
b) establish a major tree planting programme to provide screening, more attractive site environments and the capacity for expansion or relocation of some existing sites; and

c) facilitate the improvement of existing caravan sites (better landscaping, more amenity space, improved site facilities, a reorganisation to accommodate larger static caravans or replacement with holiday cabins, the replacement of touring caravans with static caravans or providing a replacement site which enables relocation of an existing intrusive facility) by allowing additional land to be used only in those circumstances.

Development on existing or extended sites will require sensitive edge-of-site landscaping and will only be acceptable under this policy in order to achieve a general upgrading of a site enhancement of the quality of accommodation and other on-site facilities provided for holidaymakers.

**POLICY RLT18**

Planning permission for additional land at Brean and Berrow to be developed for holiday accommodation (camp site, caravan site, chalets, cabins or similar) will only be permitted subject to all of the following criteria:

a) the land is required in order to allow upgrading, reorganisation or relocation of an existing caravan site (to accommodate larger units, more amenity space and better landscaping);

b) there is no net increase in the total number of units of accommodation;

c) the scheme provides for substantial tree planting and/or other landscaping at both the existing and the new site in order to screen the site from publicly accessible vantage points and to enhance the character and appearance of the area; and

d) the land is not within the area affected by Policy CNE4 (Coastal Edge and Brean Down Strategic Gap).

**Safeguarding existing holiday sites at Burnham-on-Sea, Berrow and Brean**

11.80 In view of Burnham-on-Sea's role as a Resort Town the Council considers that the continued availability of holiday accommodation within easy reach of the beaches and town centre should be an important consideration in deciding the pattern of future development. The previous Local Plan recognised that existing holiday sites located within the urban area, particularly caravan and chalet parks, may become subject to pressure for residential development and had a policy that sought to resist this (Burnham-on-Sea Local Plan, Policy BH/TOS). The fact that such sites are inevitably identified in the urban capacity study, as at least having potential to accommodate new housing development, gives continuing cause for a clear local planning policy aimed at retaining existing holiday accommodation sites.

11.81 There are also substantial chalet and static sites in the Berrow and Brean area that could be regarded as brownfield sites. However, these sites are generally outside the defined village development boundaries and therefore, Policies STR3 and STR4 justifiably restrict their development potential. Individual sites vary in scale from less than 0.5 hectares to over 10 hectares but the redevelopment of sites of any size will be resisted for both:

a) settlement strategy reasons, and

b) in order to maintain a stock of seaside holiday accommodation (and limit the potential pressure for additional greenfield land to be used for this purpose).

**POLICY RLT20**

Planning permission for proposals that would result in the loss of existing holiday accommodation sites in Burnham-on-Sea will not be granted unless:

a) The proposed development is for the provision of improved holiday accommodation or leisure / entertainment facilities, or

b) There is no longer a continuing need for the type of accommodation provided and neither the existing accommodation nor an alternative form of holiday accommodation would be viable.
**Introduction**

**12.01** Public and Community Services include services such as telecommunications, water, electricity and gas and facilities such as schools and public halls. They are services that are vital to the social and economic well being of the residents and community. Businesses and bodies outside the control of the Council provide the great majority of these services.

**Key Objectives**

To promote sustainable development by ensuring adequate provision is made for improvements to existing infrastructure to meet the needs of development without harm to the environment or quality of life in the District.

To promote the retention and provision of new community facilities and services at the neighbourhood level within our Towns, Rural Centres and Villages.

**Public Utilities**

**12.02** Public Utilities include water drainage, sewage disposal, energy, communications and emergency services. The provision of these may affect the type, location and amount of new development that can be accommodated. Public utilities will have been considered in locating the development proposals in this Plan. Utility companies being land users, need their plans for development to be taken into account.

**12.03** Utilities often need rural or countryside locations. If so, it is important that its impacts are minimised. Siting and appearance can reduce the impact of otherwise intrusive development.

**POLICY PCS1**

Proposals for the provision of new utility facilities will be encouraged provided that:

a) if sited outside the defined boundaries of settlements, a suitable alternative site within the built up area is not available; and

b) there would be no unacceptable impact on residential amenity, landscape, wildlife, ecological or archaeological interest.

**Overhead Electricity Lines**

**12.04** Local Authorities are not responsible for determining applications for new electricity lines. This lies with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. They are however a statutory consultee. Should a Local Authority object to any such proposal this would usually prompt a public inquiry to be held by the Secretary of State.

**12.05** Overhead electricity transmission lines, particularly pylon supports, by their very nature are visually intrusive. The Council will therefore seek to minimise their effect by encouraging, where practical, routes where the lines can be more easily assimilated into the landscape.

**POLICY PCS2**

The erection of overhead electricity lines, particularly in the Quantock and Mendip Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, will be resisted unless there is no reasonable alternative. Where no reasonable alternative exists, the lines should not intrude upon open skylines and be located parallel and adjacent to field boundaries or other physical features.

**12.06** Existing overhead service lines, principally electricity wires but also telephones cables, often detract from the appearance of open landscapes and historic townscapes. A more attractive environment can be achieved by undergrounding existing cables. However, locations which are valued for their ecological and archaeological importance may be irreversibly damaged by undergrounding and where such locations are identified, they should be avoided at the route planning stage. In other locations where undergrounding is proposed, works should be preceded by an environmental appraisal in order to minimise any detrimental impact on the local, natural or historic environment. There are significant practical, technical and cost disadvantages associated with the undergrounding of high voltage power lines, those over 275Kv and over. Undergrounding will therefore only be sought in exceptional circumstances. Careful line routing will usually be the most appropriate way to minimise their visual impact.

**POLICY PCS14**

The undergrounding of existing service lines will be encouraged as part of environmental improvement schemes, subject to minimising any detrimental impact on the local, natural or historic environment.
12.07 Overhead electricity transmission lines and their pylon supports are visually intrusive in built-up areas, the lines are often noisy and the electromagnetic fields that surround them can cause radio interference.

12.08 The Council recognises that there is some public concern about living and working close to sources of electromagnetic fields such as overhead electricity lines. Where applications for development close to overhead electricity lines are submitted, the Council will take into account guidance from the National Radiological Protection Board, the Government's advisory body on non-ionising radiation.

12.09 The Council will expect developers to take into account the presence of any overhead lines and design the layout to take account of the amenity of future occupiers of properties. The Council will encourage uses such as car parking, roads and areas of informal open space or landscaping directly beneath or immediately adjacent to any overhead line.

**POLICY PCS3**
The Council will have regard to advice of the National Radiological Protection Board in determining planning applications for development close to overhead lines.

**Telecommunications**

12.10 Telecommunications, because of the nature of development and growth in facilities, require particular attention. The Government encourages the growth of telecommunications in order to improve business and domestic communications, which it regards as essential to the functioning of a modern economy. It nevertheless, recognises the need to preserve the national heritage and does not wish to see the appearance or character of buildings, towns, villages and countryside suffer damage as a consequence of such development. Some small-scale telecommunication is permitted under the General Permitted Development Order. There is a requirement that it shall be removed after it is no longer needed and that the land be restored. However, large scale structures or groups of smaller structures may require permission.

**POLICY PCS4**
Proposals for telecommunications development will be permitted, taking account of the limitations imposed by the nature of the telecommunications network and technology, provided that all the following criteria are met:

a) evidence is provided regarding the need for the proposed development;

b) there will be no serious adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area;

c) it can be demonstrated that existing masts, suitable existing buildings or structures cannot be used for that purpose;

d) the proposal would not detract from the character or setting of a Conservation Area or Listed Building; and

e) there would be no unacceptable adverse impact on residential amenity.

Within the Quantock and Mendip Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other environmentally sensitive areas, proposals for telecommunications development will only be acceptable where they would provide an essential link in a national network and where it can be shown that no suitable alternative site exists. In such cases measures will be required to minimise any adverse impact.

**Energy**

12.11 Renewable energy is obtained from naturally occurring resources, for example solar, water or wind power, energy from plant material, or from recycling waste. The development and use of renewable energy can be achieved through both small and large innovative schemes, for example from domestic and solar panels to wind farms. The costs and benefits of developing renewable energy sources will need to be balanced against a range of planning and environmental criteria, for instance, local physical and visual effects, needs of nature conservation, the need to reduce consumption of non-renewable resources and the need to reduce pollution.

12.12 The Council will encourage the development of alternative sources of renewable energy where this does not cause unacceptable harm to the environment, unless there are overriding reasons of public or national interest.
POLICY PCS5
Proposals for the development of the sources of renewable energy schemes, including wind power, will be permitted provided that all the following criteria are met:

a) are sited and designed so as to minimise their impact on the landscape, utilising landscape features;

b) will not have an unacceptable impact on the character or setting of a settlement;

c) will not lead to an unacceptable level of nuisance by reason of noise, safety, shadow flicker, electro-magnetic interference or reflected light. Particular attention will be given to the impact on dwellings and other regularly occupied premises;

d) will not unacceptably affect the character or setting of a Listed Building, Conservation Area or a scheduled ancient monument; and

e) will not unacceptably affect a site designated for its ecological or archaeological value either during or after construction.

Within the Mendip and Quantock Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, proposals for the development of renewable energy schemes will only be acceptable where it is in the public or national interest and it can be shown that no alternative site exists.

12.13 The layout, siting and design of buildings can have a marked impact on their energy efficiency. The orientation of dwellings to maximise passive solar gain can reduce the need for energy derived from fossil fuels. Similarly, the avoidance of particularly cold or windy sites or the creation of more sheltered micro-climates, can minimise the amount of energy needed. Traditional building designs and urban layouts will often have taken energy conservation into account.

12.14 Buildings account for almost half of the United Kingdom’s delivered energy consumption and associated emissions of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas causing climate change. Action by Planning Authorities to increase energy efficiency can complement building regulations and the wide range of other initiatives.

POLICY PCS6
Development will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that energy efficiency has been taken into account in the design, layout, siting and construction of the proposal and the use of landscaping and that all measures which are practicable are included as part of the scheme.

Community Facilities and Services

12.15 Community facilities and services include public halls, schools, places of worship, libraries, museums, creches, day centres, healthcare uses and public houses. They make a vital contribution to the social and economic life of the community, are especially important for elderly and disabled people and for those who do not have easy access to private or public transport. Proposals for new or enhanced community facilities are assessed under Policy RLT14, whilst the retention of community facilities and services are addressed under Policy PCS7 below.

12.16 The Council will resist proposals that would result in the erosion of community facilities and services, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there is no long-term requirement for their retention. In the case of a commercial venture, the applicant will need to satisfy the Council that the existing use is no longer commercially viable and where a business is continuing to trade, that a genuine attempt has been made to market the enterprise as a going concern.

12.17 Shops and post offices, especially in rural areas, are important to communities. Policies for their retention and improvement are set out in the Shopping and Town Centre Chapter (Policy SH11).

POLICY PCS7
Planning permission for proposals that would result in the loss of community facilities and services will be refused unless:

a) there are appropriate alternative facilities locally;

b) the proposed use would be of equal or greater community benefit;

c) the existing use is no longer viable; and

d) where planning permission is granted for the change of use of an important facility, conversion works should be such
as not to preclude a later reversion to the original use.

12.18 The potential extension of existing community facilities and educational facilities will be facilitated where the need for expansion can be demonstrated. In such cases, government guidance along with Policy STR3 of the Local Plan will be key in providing the relevant advice.

POLICY PCS8
The extension of existing and the provision of new community facilities and education facilities will be encouraged. Where a shortfall in community facilities has been identified, the provision of facilities and/or safeguarding sufficient land for the provision of such facilities to satisfy that need will be encouraged. Exceptionally, where no site within a settlement can be found, a site may be permitted adjoining a settlement.

Education

12.19 The Local Education Authority (Somerset County Council) has been consulted on the future needs for additional school capacity. A new primary school is to be provided as part of the South Bridgwater developments (Proposal H55). This will provide for the additional children from this development and replace the existing school at Somerset Bridge, Bridgwater.

PROPOSAL PCS18
Land is allocated for a primary school (2 hectares) at Dawes Farm, Bridgwater (as defined on the Proposals Map).

12.20 The Education Authority will require additional primary and secondary school capacity for the housing development proposed in this Local Plan. For all large sites (normally 50 dwellings adjusted to take account of different dwelling mixes, the particular circumstances of local schools and the cumulative impact of sites) a contribution will be sought to additional educational facilities where there is insufficient capacity at nearby schools. Circular 1/97 states that the provision of educational facilities may be sought by planning obligations.

12.21 In addition to the requirements for school capacity that arise from new housing proposed in the Local Plan, the Education Authority has identified a need for additional or extended playing fields at Fairlands Middle School and Kings of Wessex Community School, Cheddar and Blake School, Bridgwater, Brent Knoll Primary School and North Newton Primary School. It is appropriate that these requirements are reflected in the Local Plan.

12.22 If land is not required for an extension of playing fields at Kings of Wessex Community School, Cheddar (on a site north of the River Yeo), the site would be appropriate as public open space. The site adjoins an area proposed in the Plan as public open space (Proposal RLT8).

POLICY PCS9
Where a proposal for residential development creates a need for necessary, relevant and reasonable educational infrastructure provision, a planning obligation will be sought to meet that need. The scale of contributions sought will relate to the scale of need arising from the proposed development.

PROPOSAL PCS11
Land is allocated for educational purposes (as defined on the Proposals Map) at:

- Fairlands Middle School, Cheddar;
- Kings of Wessex Community School, Cheddar;
- Brent Knoll Primary School;
- North Newton Primary School and
- Blake School, Bridgwater.

Pollution Control

Sewage Treatment Works

12.23 The Districts main urban areas and most villages are served by mains drainage, but some villages and the remoter rural areas are not. All new development will be required to provide satisfactory means of foul drainage disposal. Policy CNE8 in the Countryside and Natural Environment Chapter will ensure that no development will have detrimental impact within SSSI’s. Ground conditions and water surface levels in the Levels and Moors are a particular problem and therefore, septic tanks are not normally acceptable in these areas.
Sewage treatment works can be “bad neighbours” because of smell, particularly for housing. It is prudent to control the kind of development permitted close by to treatment works. Wessex Water have identified zones around sewage treatment at Bridgwater, Cannington, Cheddar, East Lyng, Mark, Nether Stowey/Fiddington to address this problem. Wessex Water, the Environment Agency and the Council’s Environmental Health Department will be consulted on any proposal for housing or other odour sensitive developments close to sewage treatment works.

**POLICY PCS12**

Proposals for housing and other odour sensitive developments close to sewage treatment works will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that they will not result in unacceptable living or working conditions for the occupants of those developments.

**Hazardous Installations**

12.25 Certain sites and pipelines are designated as notifiable installations by virtue of the quantities of hazardous substance present. Under the Planning (Hazardous Substances Act) 1990, hazardous substances consent is required for storage or use of a hazardous substance in amounts at or above its controlled quantity. This is in addition to normal planning controls, aimed at keeping these separated from housing and other land uses with which such installations might be incompatible from the safety viewpoint. The Council will consult the Health and Safety Executive, as appropriate.

12.26 The area covered by this Local Plan already contains a number of such notifiable installations. Whilst they are subject to stringent controls under existing health and safety legislation, it is prudent to control the kinds of development permitted in the vicinity of these installations. For this reason the Council has been advised by the Health and Safety Executive of consultation distances for each of these installations. In determining whether or not to grant planning permission for a proposed development within these consultation distances, the Council will consult the Health and Safety Executive about risks to the proposed development from the notifiable installation.

**POLICY PCS13**

Planning permission will be refused for development involving the storage or use of a hazardous substance, where it will be in close proximity to housing or places of work and in any other situations where the safety of the public or environment will be put at risk. When considering proposals for development in the vicinity of installations involving hazardous substances, the Health and Safety Executive will be consulted and their views taken into account.

**Noise Pollution**

12.27 Noise is an important environmental factor which can affect people’s health as well as the quality of their lives. The adverse affects of noise does not depend solely upon its loudness. The character of the noise is a very important factor, as well as psychological factors such as the hearer's disposition to the noise source. Noise sensitive development should not be permitted in a locality which has, or is likely to have, an unacceptable noise climate. Particular land uses, such as dwellings, schools, hospitals and similar institutions are sensitive to noise. They should therefore be separated from major sources of noise pollution.

12.28 The degree of noise experienced can have a considerable impact on the way in which a place is experienced. Many parts of the District have a tranquil character and persistent noise would unacceptably affect them. These areas should be protected from activities that would generate persistent or disruptive noise.

**POLICY PCS15**

Noise generating development will not be permitted if it would:

a) be liable to unacceptably increase the level or disruptive character of noise experienced in any area to the detriment of its character; or

b) be liable to unacceptably increase the noise experienced by the users of existing or proposed noise sensitive development to the detriment of those users.

Noise sensitive development will not be permitted if its users would be unacceptably affected by noise generating uses.
Land Affected by Contamination

12.29 Brownfield land should be re-used for building wherever possible in order to minimise pressure for the development of greenfield land. Previously used land may have been contaminated by its previous use and may need to be made safe, to a suitable level, for a new use. Contamination may put at risk the people working on a site, the occupiers and land users of buildings and land, and the buildings or services themselves. Contaminants may also escape from a site causing water pollution or pollution of land nearby. Risks associated with contamination need to be identified early in the development process so that the choice of new use is appropriate to the degree and type of contamination and the cost of remedial action. An assessment of any site where contamination is suspected should therefore be carried out by the developer, in advance of the granting of planning permission.

POLICY PCS16
Where development is proposed on or near a site where there is known to be, or there is a reason to believe there may be contamination, a site assessment will be required prior to the grant of planning permission, in order to establish the nature and extent of the contamination. Development will not be permitted unless sufficient information is provided and practicable and effective measures are taken to treat, contain or control any contamination so as not to:

a) place the occupiers of the development and neighbouring land users at risk from the contamination;

b) threaten the structural integrity of any building on or adjoining the site;

c) lead to the contamination of any water course, water body or aquifer or allow contamination to continue;

d) lead to the contamination of adjoining land or allow such contamination to continue; or

e) lead to the release of contamination to the air.

Light pollution:-
Outdoor Lighting and Floodlighting

12.30 Light pollution is not a "statutory nuisance" but there is growing concern about the effect of excessive or intrusive artificial lighting. Particular concerns are the loss of dark night skies and therefore, impaired visibility of astronomical features (eg the Milky Way) and also local nuisances arising from the glare of intensive or poorly directed lighting. Floodlighting of buildings such as churches and other buildings of architectural significance, is often installed to add night-time visual interest but, the potential adverse impacts of such schemes, particularly in unlit rural areas, should also be considered.

POLICY PCS17
Development that includes floodlighting or other external lighting, will only be permitted if it is shielded to minimise the escape of light upwards and into areas where it is not required. Permission will not be granted if the proposal would:

a) be intrusive in an unlit rural area and/or

b) adversely affect local amenity by virtue of the intensity, direction or hours of lighting and/or

c) adversely affect road safety.
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Additional Criteria for the Development of Allocated Housing Sites to be Addressed as part of Supplementary Planning Guidance (to be read in conjunction with general Proposals for development).

Summary of Sites

a) Allocated Brownfield Sites

Proposal

H4 44-50 Friarn Street, Bridgwater (about 12 dwellings)
H5 The Cornmill, Bridgwater Docks (about 80 dwellings)
H6 42-44 St John’s Street and land adjoining, Bridgwater (about 10 dwellings)
H7 Land on east side of Taunton Road, Bridgwater (about 45 dwellings)
H8 Mount Street (SWEB Depot), Bridgwater (about 20 dwellings)
H9 Land at Horsepond, Bridgwater (about 20 dwellings)
H11 Monmouth Trading Estate, Bridgwater (about 40 dwellings)
H12 Land east of Colley Lane, Bridgwater (about 35 dwellings)
H14 Land to the rear of 87-97 Bath Road, Bridgwater (about 18 dwellings)
H15 Land east of Bristol Road, Bridgwater (about 50 dwellings)
H47 Land at Old Taunton Road Industrial Estate, Bridgwater (about 65 dwellings)
H49 MOT Garage, All Saints Terrace, Bridgwater (about 14 dwellings)
H50 The Old Armoury, Blake Street, Bridgwater (about 10 dwellings)
H51 Wesleyan Chapel, King Street, Bridgwater (about 13 dwellings)
H52 Land at Wembdon Road, Bridgwater (about 200 dwellings)

b) Allocated Greenfield Sites

Proposal

H55 Land at South Bridgwater, Bridgwater (about 1450 dwellings)
H59 Land at Trivetts Farm, Cossington (about 16 dwellings)

BROWNFIELD HOUSING ALLOCATIONS

Proposal H4 44-50 Friarn Street, Bridgwater

Development Concept:

to provide an attractive enclosure to Friarn Street and Silver Street with terraced housing developed sympathetic to the immediate local context.

Design Brief:

a) agreed financial contribution towards bus and cycle provision in Bridgwater;

b) two-storey frontage to Silver Street (west side) to provide strong enclosure to street.

Proposal H5 The Cornmill, Bridgwater Docks

Development Concept:

i) to provide a high density development with exciting elevational treatments which has a strong link to the industrial heritage of the Dock, river and canal; and

ii) provides for a substantial portion of adaptation of existing buildings facing the Canal and Dock.

Design Brief:

a) development to incorporate adaptation of main building on eastern side of site for residential use;
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b) retention and integration of existing chimney on front elevation;

c) attractive floorscape scheme to site frontage to relate to remainder of Dock;

d) archaeological evaluation to be agreed;

e) facing materials for all development to be predominantly brick; and

f) because of existing sub-standard approach roads to this site (Victoria Road, Lyndale Avenue, Chatham Avenue and Kendale Road) a housing development that seeks to minimise car use would be appropriate, given also that the site has good pedestrian accessibility to the Town Centre.

Proposal H6 42-44 St John Street and land adjoining, Bridgwater

Development Concept:

i) to reinforce the residential function with small scale terraced housing which defines a strong street frontage to Gordon Terrace and Cranleigh Gardens; and

ii) encourage a ground floor retail frontage to St John Street.

Design Brief:

Note

a) to provide for a more complimentary development to Gordon Terrace, it would be preferable for the identified site area to be increased to provide for greater site depth for land to the rear of St John Street to provide for a terraced frontage; and

b) it is understood that a cemetery exists on the western part of the site which may influence detailed layout.

c) new development to be two storey with strong vertical rhythm for elevations, brick for outer facing with tiled roofs;

d) frontage to Cranleigh Gardens to be back edge of pavement with direct pedestrian access;

e) corner building treatment to St John Street /Cranleigh Gardens;

f) gable end treatment for north side entrance to Gordon Terrace;

g) development on north side of Gordon Terrace to be terracing with solid front boundaries (using salvaged red sandstone from former chapel);

h) new terrace on immediate east side of No. 4 Gordon Terrace to provide a “focus” view from Cranleigh Gardens;

i) terrace at east end of Gordon Terrace to provide focus view along main axis (i.e. south west to north east); and

k) provision for some rear access.

Proposal H7 Land at east side of Taunton Road, Bridgwater

Development Concept:

to provide a variety of housing accommodation with strong frontage to Taunton Road and attractive relationship to the canal.

Design Brief:

Note

a) it is understood that the site may involve contamination which may affect detailed layout considerations.

b) access from Taunton Road – detailed design of junction will need to bring forward proposals for road widening (as part of bus lane provision for Taunton Road as contained in Bridgwater Transport Study);

c) outward facing frontages to reinforce approach to Town Centre;

d) provision of cycle track from Rhyne Bridge (Taunton Road) to Bridgwater and Taunton Canal and into housing site;

e) outward looking frontages to face the canal and adjoining cycle route;

f) strong landscaped belt along south and eastern boundary of site;

g) density for Taunton Road frontage to be in sympathy with established development and “grain” in immediate locality;
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h) densities throughout site to increase from west to east; and

j) the site abuts or straddles an open or culverted water course and the development will be required to accommodate the requirements of the appropriate internal drainage board.

Proposal H8 Mount Street, (SWEB Depot) Bridgwater

Development Concept:

to provide a high density housing development in the Town Centre which adds to the varied character of Mount Street.

Design Brief:

Note

a) the site identified excludes the existing frontage building currently in retail use (former Bridgwater Electric Co.);

b) vehicular access from Mount Street;

c) parts of the site may be appropriate for three-storey development;

d) possible provision of internal landscaped courtyard; and

e) parking provision/standards will be reduced appropriately given the proximity to services, facilities and public transport.

Proposal H9 Land at Horsepond, Bridgwater

Development Concept:

to provide for a high density street development in close proximity to the Town Centre and which reinforces the residential character of Friarn Street.

Design Brief:

a) early contact should be made with the County Field Archaeologist to assess local importance and potential influences on layout;

b) site boundary could be extended eastwards to provide a more regular shaped site;

c) creation of a north-south street structure along Horsepond – predominantly two-

storey housing or linked forms;

d) possible courtyard/arrangement for southern portion of site (two storeys), forming an appropriate edge treatment to Broadway; and

e) Durleigh Brook (which flows west-east through the site) is not to be culverted and to provide an internal feature of the development.

f) the site abuts or straddles an open or culverted water course and the development will be required to accommodate the requirements of the appropriate internal drainage board.

Proposal H11 Monmouth Trading Estate, Bridgwater

Development Concept:

provision of a variety of residential accommodation with easy access to Town Centre and local facilities.

Design Brief:

a) vehicular access from Monmouth Street with appropriate visibility splays;

b) the visual and physical impact of road access into the site should be kept to the minimum;

c) a pedestrian link through the development site to be created;

d) the irregularity of the site should provide for an interesting variety of accommodation incorporating some conversion of existing buildings;

e) part of the site may be appropriate for three-storey development (northern portion);

f) access for pedestrians and cyclists and connections to the wider cycle and pedestrian network; and

g) appropriate improvement in bus facility provision.
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Proposal H12 Land east of Colley Lane, Bridgwater

Development Concept:

i) the surplus car park to the industrial operation can provide an opportunity for an innovative housing development in an area of diverse existing development; and

ii) development to provide for a “focus area” within the development (such as a landscaped open space) and to resist any standardised treatment of internal road layout.

Design Brief:

a) appropriate bunding or measures to address noise reduction;

b) some three-storey development would be appropriate;

c) access for pedestrians and cyclists and connections to the wider cycle and pedestrian network; and

d) agreed contributions to improvements in bus facility provision.

Proposal H14 Land to rear of 87-97 Bath Road, Bridgwater

Design Brief:

a) access into site may require acquisition of adjoining properties;

b) two-storey development predominantly of brick and tile to simple proportions and layout;

c) possible courtyard arrangement focussed on a central public space;

d) access for pedestrians and cyclists and connections to the wider cycle and pedestrian network;

e) agreed contribution to improvement in bus facility provision;

f) satisfactory vehicular access to Bath Road; and

g) open space provision.

Proposal H15 Land east of Bristol Road, Bridgwater

Design Brief:

a) access for pedestrians and cyclists and connections to the wider cycle and pedestrian network;

b) agreed contributions to bus facility provision;

c) satisfactory vehicular access;

d) appropriate open space provision;

e) safeguarding important natural and built features and buffers as appropriate; and

f) an appropriate archaeological evaluation and ecological survey.

Proposal H47 Land at Old Taunton Road Industrial Estate, Bridgwater

Development Concept:

to provide for medium to high density development with a strong relationship to the River Parrett.

Design Brief:

a) a contaminated land assessment is likely to be required;

b) access for maintenance to Hamp Brook will need to be safeguarded;

c) any buildings should be set back a minimum of 8.0 metres from the flood defences to the east of the site;

d) access will be from Old Taunton Road and traffic management measures may be required to reduce the volume and speed of through traffic using this route; and

e) opportunity to enhance Hamp Brook and reduce existing culverting.

Proposal H49 MOT Garage, All Saints Terrace, Bridgwater

Design Brief:

a) agreed contributions to the completion of the Colley Lane northern access route (Proposal TM2c) and other modes of transport;
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b) access for pedestrians and cyclists and connection to the wider cycle and pedestrian network;

c) appropriate bunding or measures to address noise reduction;

d) some three storey development may be appropriate; and

e) consideration to development in conjunction with adjoining Proposal H12.

Proposal H50 The Old Armoury, Blake Street, Bridgwater

Development Concept:

to secure the re-use of this vacant property targeted for enhancement in the Townscape Heritage Initiative.

Design Brief:

a) conversion of existing building with suitability for mixed uses;

b) development without on-street parking provision is appropriate at this Town Centre location;

c) opportunity to enhance Durleigh Brook in close proximity to Town Mill and the Blake Museum; and

d) access for pedestrians and cyclists and connection to the wider cycle and pedestrian network, in particular to St Mary Street.

Proposal H51 Wesleyan Chapel, King Street, Bridgwater

Development Concept:

to secure mixed-use conversion of the Wesleyan Chapel and adjoining school rooms in line with the objectives set out in the Townscape Heritage Initiative.

Design Brief:

a) retention of public access to the chapel with residential development in the adjoining building;

b) development without on-street parking provision is appropriate at this Town Centre location; and

c) vehicular access will be via the Northern Distributor Road;

d) access for pedestrians and cyclists and connection to the wider cycle and pedestrian network;

e) open space shall be provided at a rate equivalent to 2.4ha per 1000 people and include associated equipment; and

f) a proportion of affordable housing at a level indicated in the Sedgemoor Housing Needs Survey.

Proposal H52 Land at Wembdon Road, Bridgwater

Design Brief:

a) suitable for a range of housing densities;

b) all industrial buildings to be removed and uses to cease to permit a comprehensive residential redevelopment;

c) vehicular access will be via the Northern Distributor Road;

d) access for pedestrians and cyclists and connection to the wider cycle and pedestrian network;

e) open space shall be provided at a rate equivalent to 2.4ha per 1000 people and include associated equipment; and

e) open space shall be provided at a rate equivalent to 2.4ha per 1000 people and include associated equipment; and

f) a proportion of affordable housing at a level indicated in the Sedgemoor Housing Needs Survey.

Proposal H16 Radio Station, Highbridge

Design Brief:

a) the development should comprise a range of densities and mix of housing types and sizes;

b) the site shall preferably be developed comprehensively with the land to the north of the site (Proposal H22). If development proceeds in advance of a comprehensive scheme, then a significant landscaped buffer and edge treatment to the north western and north eastern boundaries will be required;

c) vehicular access to the site shall only be from Worston Road (adjacent to 148 Worston Road) or from the north in conjunction with the comprehensive development of adjoining land (Proposal H22);

d) the development shall include a comprehensive framework of cycleway and pedestrian routes through and across the site to link with the existing cycleway network of Rosewood Farm and to the King Alfred Community School;
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Design Brief:

a) suitable for a range and mix of housing styles, with higher densities to the east and lower densities towards Apex Park and the River Brue;

b) the site shall be developed comprehensively with vehicular access from Newtown Road only as an extension of Tylers Way along the northern site frontage;

c) the new estate road shall incorporate a revised access to the pumping station to the west of the site, vehicular connections to Clyce Road will be terminated;

d) pedestrian and cycleway access to be provided from Clyce Road to connect into the wider network of public footpaths and into Apex Park through the site, linking Apex Park and Clyce Road;

e) all industrial buildings to be removed and industrial open storage uses to cease to permit a form of comprehensive residential development;

f) public open space shall be provided at the rate of 2.4 hectares per thousand people and shall be located in the south west corner of the site to form a riverside park;

g) the development shall safeguard important natural features such as trees and hedgerows and shall include the comprehensive landscaping of the site based on a tree and hedgerow survey;

h) suitable measures to protect the adjacent SSSI and no buildings within 15 metres of top of bank;

j) new housing should be orientated to maximise the outlook over the river and Apex Park;

k) the visual impact of the development when viewed from Apex Park shall be minimised, exploiting and having regard to the areas landscape character;

l) measures will be required to mitigate any effects of landfill gas (part of the site is tipped land);

m) an appropriate archaeological evaluation and ecological survey shall be made of the entire site;

n) a comprehensive survey shall be undertaken to establish the possibility of contaminated land at this site and shall include remedial measures to ameliorate the affects of any contaminants found;

o) a comprehensive surface water drainage study of existing conditions and proposed development; and

p) necessary flood protection works in consultation with the Environment Agency.

Proposal H46 Land north and south of Springfield Road, Highbridge

Design Brief:

a) suitable for high or medium density housing;

b) comprehensive redevelopment shall include the demolition of storage buildings and the removal of open storage uses;

c) vehicular access to be via a new junction close to the existing junction of the A38 and Burnham Road;

d) pedestrian and cycle links to the A38 and towards the Town Centre shall be provided from the site;
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e) a noise reduction barrier shall be provided along the eastern boundary of the site with the railway line;
f) landscaping shall include the retention of existing trees where possible and safeguard the adjacent County Wildlife Site;
g) development along the north side of the frontage facing the A38 shall be orientated to face the principal road;
h) open space shall be provided at a rate equivalent to 2.4ha per 1000 people to include associated equipment;
j) a suitable form of enclosure to the A38 shall include establishing a dense planting scheme for the embankment along the northern boundary; and
k) a comprehensive surface water drainage study of existing conditions and proposed developments.

H60 Highbridge Market

Development Concept

Prominent Town Centre site should respect and enhance the setting of the adjacent Highbridge Hotel (Listed Building) and contribute to enhancing the area as a gateway to Highbridge.

Design Brief:

a) principal vehicular access via Tyler Way /Scott Road;
b) site was formerly part of Highbridge wharf and there is still evidence of some structures (eg lock walls at rear of Jubilee Gardens) which should be retained and open to public access;
c) suitable for medium-high density scheme of 2 and 2.5 storey buildings;
d) views of the site approaching from the south (Brue Bridge) and from the east along Market Street should be carefully considered; and

e) pedestrian movement through the site should be accommodated.

GREENFIELD HOUSING ALLOCATIONS

Proposal H55 Land at South Bridgwater

Design Brief:

a) development to be in accordance with approved supplementary planning guidance;
b) principal access will be from Huntworth Roundabout and the Stockmoor link (TM2s) with possible secondary access from Showground Roundabout;
c) contributions towards a comprehensive package of transportation measures identified in the Local Transport Plan that currently include a bus lane (TM1a), park and ride site (TM2h), Colley Lane Southern Access Route (TM2b), subsidised public transport, provision of cycle and pedestrian links;
d) provision of primary school (Proposal PCS18);
e) provision of landscaped Country Park (Proposal CNE18); and
f) neighbourhood centre/community facilities.

Proposal H59 Land at Trivetts Farm, Cossington

Design Brief:

a) comprehensive re-development of site to include the provision of a village hall and associated car parking;
b) provide for a mix of housing types and sizes and provide for an appropriate level of affordable housing based on the Sedgemoor Housing Needs Survey;
c) built frontage to north side of Middle Street to provide enclosure to street; and

d) single vehicular access from Middle Street to serve residential development and the village hall.
Appendix 5.1
Sedgemoor District Local Plan

Additional Criteria for the Development of Allocated Employment Sites to be Addressed as part of Supplementary Planning Guidance (to be read in conjunction with general Policies for development)

Proposal E1 Somerset Bridge, Bridgwater:

a) any development shall be based on a planning brief for the site that shall be subject to public consultation and subsequent approval as supplementary planning guidance;

b) access for pedestrians and cyclists should be provided via a link to existing routes along the Canal and River. Provision shall be made for a pedestrian and cycle link across the site linking the routes along the Canal and River;

c) the design and layout of the development shall take account of the need for efficient and convenient public transport;

d) vehicular access shall be provided solely from the Colley Lane Southern Access Route;

e) the development shall safeguard important natural features with buffers as appropriate, including trees and hedgerows, and shall include a comprehensive landscaping scheme based on a tree and hedgerow survey;

f) the visual impact of the development when viewed from the countryside, the Canal, the River Parrett and railway line shall be minimised, exploiting and having regard to the area's landscape character. A substantial landscaping screen shall be provided along the boundary with the Canal and River Parrett;

g) before development commences, a site investigation should be carried out to ascertain the presence of landfill gas and a report of the investigation should be submitted to the District Council;

h) an appropriate archaeological evaluation and ecological survey shall be made of the entire site; and

i) surface water drainage cannot be accommodated in the existing Drainage Board rhyne system and surface water attenuation together with a separate pumped discharge direct to the River Parrett will be required.

Proposal E12 Land at Wellwothy’s Playing Field, Salmon Parade, Bridgwater

a) surface water dispersal should be via existing surface water sewers.

Proposal E13 Land to the north of Bridgwater Retail Park, east of The Leggar, Bridgwater

a) surface water drainage should be via existing surface water sewers; and

b) vehicular access will be from The Leggar and contributions to completion of this road will be sought.

Proposal E14 Land at East Quay, Bridgwater

a) surface water drainage should be via existing surface water sewers; and

b) new buildings should be set back 8.0 metres from the existing flood defences.

Proposal E2 Land at Isleport Business Park, Highbridge:

a) vehicular access shall be provided solely from Isleport Business Park;

b) the development shall safeguard important features, including ditches, trees and hedgerows with buffers, as appropriate and shall include a comprehensive landscaping scheme based on a tree and hedgerow survey;

c) the visual impact of the development when viewed from residential properties in Isleport Lane and the surrounding countryside shall be minimised, exploiting and having regard to the area's landscape character. A substantial landscaping screen with bunding shall be provided along the boundary with Isleport Lane;

d) the residential amenity of neighbouring residential properties in Isleport Lane shall be protected; and

e) an appropriate archaeological evaluation and ecological survey shall be carried out on the entire site.
Proposal E3  Land at Steart Farm, Wedmore Road, Cheddar:

a) any development shall be based on a planning brief for the site that shall be subject to public consultation and subsequent approval as supplementary planning guidance;

b) access for pedestrians and cyclists should be provided via a link through the existing Business Park to the proposed route linking housing south of the River Yeo to Wedmore Road and to the former railway;

c) vehicular access shall be provided from the Cheddar Business Park or from Wedmore Road;

d) the traditional stone buildings of Steart Farm shall be retained and converted to employment use as appropriate;

e) the development shall safeguard important natural features, including the rhyne to the south; trees and hedgerows (with buffer as appropriate), and shall include a comprehensive landscaping scheme based on a tree and hedgerow survey;

f) the visual impact of the development when viewed from the surrounding countryside, the River Yeo and Wedmore Road shall be minimised, exploiting and having regard to the area’s landscape character, the opportunity to create a community woodland and existing boundary treatment along Wedmore Road;

g) the residential amenity of adjacent residential properties shall be protected;

i) liaison with Environment Agency to establish flood plain limits across the site, to establish the potential development area, and/or identify flood mitigation works. Any discharges to the River Yeo must be attenuated by the use of Best Management Practices, and

j) an appropriate archaeological evaluation and ecological survey shall be carried out on the entire site.
### Table 1 Accessibility Profile Scoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parking Provision</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pedestrian Links</strong></td>
<td>Site with direct and safe pedestrian access to local services and/or residential areas within 200m</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Site with direct and safe pedestrian access to local services and/or residential areas between 200m - 400m</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No direct and safe pedestrian access</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cycleway Links</strong></td>
<td>Site access by Cycleway</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cycleway within 200m</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Cycleway within 200m</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bus Service</strong></td>
<td>Half - hourly Bus Service within 200m</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Half - hourly Bus Service within 400m</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No half - hourly Bus Service within 400m</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Car Parking</strong></td>
<td>Public Car Park within 200m</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Car Park within 400m</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Public Car Park within 400m</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2 % Reduction in Maximum Provision following Accessibility Profile Total

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accessibility Profile Total</th>
<th>High Restraint Area Bridgwater Town Centre % Reduction</th>
<th>Standard Restraint outside Bridgwater Town Centre % Reduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>85</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 3 Non-Residential Vehicle Parking and Servicing Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use Class</th>
<th>Development Category</th>
<th>Maximum Provision for Staff / Visitor Parking</th>
<th>Servicing / Essential Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1 Shops</td>
<td>Small group of shops up to 100 m² net retail floorspace</td>
<td>1 space per 25 m² gross floor area</td>
<td>Sufficient manoeuvring and parking space for the maximum number and size of vehicles visiting the premises in an operational capacity at any one time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Larger shops from 100 m² to 2,000 m² net retail floorspace</td>
<td>1 space per 20 m² gross floor area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Larger supermarkets and superstores</td>
<td>1 space per 15 m² gross floor area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Garden Centres and DIY stores, electrical, furniture and carpet centres</td>
<td>1 space per 20m³ of gross floor area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 Financial and Professional Services</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 space per 30m³ gross floor area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3 Food and Drink</td>
<td>Restaurants and Public Houses</td>
<td>1 space per 4 seats in restaurant areas and 1 space per 5m² in remainder of gross floor space devoted to patrons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1 &amp; B2 General Industrial</td>
<td>General Industry</td>
<td>1 space of 50m² per 250m² gross floor area for lorry parking plus 1 car space per 40m² gross industrial floor space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B8 Storage or Distribution</td>
<td>Wholesale Warehouse Distribution</td>
<td>1 space of 50m² per 250m² gross floor area for customer lorry parking plus 1 space per 200m² for private car parking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1 Hotels</td>
<td>Hotels</td>
<td>1 space per bedroom plus 1 space per 25m² all other floor area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boarding / Guest Houses</td>
<td>1 space per 2 occupants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 7.1
Sedgemoor District Local Plan

### Table 3 (cont) Non-Residential Vehicle Parking and Servicing Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use Class</th>
<th>Development Category</th>
<th>Maximum Provision for Staff / Visitor Parking</th>
<th>Servicing / Essential Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Nursery, Primary and Secondary</td>
<td>1 space for each full time permanent member of staff.</td>
<td>Sufficient manoeuvering and parking space for the maximum number and size of vehicles visiting the premises in an operational capacity at any one time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colleges</td>
<td>1 space for each full time permanent member of staff plus 1 space per 5 students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garages and</td>
<td>Repair Garages</td>
<td>1 space per 20 m² gross of workshop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showrooms</td>
<td>Showrooms</td>
<td>1 space per 100 m² of car display areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Clinics, Surgeries and Health Centres</td>
<td>1 space for each full time permanent member of staff</td>
<td>2 spaces per 5 m² gross public waiting area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hospitals and Nursing Homes</td>
<td>1 space per bed</td>
<td>Included in staff / visitors parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly and</td>
<td>Theatres, Cinemas, Concert Halls,</td>
<td>1 space per 10 seats or 10 m² of public floorspace, whichever is the greatest</td>
<td>2 spaces near the entrance and clear of the highway for setting down and pick up of passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>Places of Worship, Swimming Pools,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indoor and Outdoor sports facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Buildings</td>
<td>Libraries</td>
<td>1 space per 50 m² of gross public floor space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Halls</td>
<td>1 space per 10 seats</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7.1
Sedgemoor District Local Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>Maximum Provision for Residential Parking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dwelling Houses and Flats Bed Sitting Rooms and Single Bedroom Flats</td>
<td>2 car spaces (which could include a garage) per dwelling. This standard may be reduced for one-bedroom dwellings and bedsits to 1 car space per dwelling plus 1 additional space for every three one-bedroom dwellings and bedsits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Person’s Dwellings with Warden’s Accommodation</td>
<td>1 car space per four dwellings plus 2 car spaces for each Warden’s unit, otherwise standards as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Centre Dwellings</td>
<td>1 car space for each unit of accommodation. Standards may be varied depending upon the proximity of and demand for public car parking spaces and availability of public transport in the vicinity. Because of the differences which exist in various Town Centres, developers are advised to check with the Planning Authority before designing schemes for Town Centre residential development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Caravan Sites</td>
<td>1 space per caravan plus 1 space per three caravans for visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday Chalets</td>
<td>1 car space per chalet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parking Provision | Table 5 Design of Parking Areas

The following details are provided as a minimum guide to the layout of car parks and may be varied at the discretion of the Planning Authority.

i) Generally, dimensions of 2.5m x 4.8m should be provided for normal parking spaces, with a distance of 6m between rows for access where spaces are at right angles to the traffic lane.

ii) The distance between rows can be reduced where the spaces are angled to the traffic lane, for example where the angle is 45 degrees a distance of 5m will suffice.

iii) A 6m traffic lane will be required for a single row of parking spaces.

iv) Where spaces are not marked out a minimum of 24m² per space will be required.

v) Lorry parking spaces should be 3m x 15m, with adequate space included for turning and manoeuvring.

vi) Normally, an access strip 1.2m wide will be required alongside bays marked for disabled drivers.

vii) Wherever possible car parking should comply with the Association of Chief Police Officers Secured Car Park Scheme.
Details of the Green Wedges, Green Edges and Strategic Gaps identified in Policy CNE4

Wembdon/Bridgwater Strategic Gap

Being situated only one and a quarter miles from the centre of Bridgwater, Wembdon is effectively a suburb of the Town, but with its own separate identity and character. Frontage development on Wembdon Road has a very brief gap at Whitegate Field, an area of open land owned by the District Council, but the settlements have almost coalesced.

Several public footpaths cross the area, all of which are locally important and one is part of the long distance “River Parrett Trail”. The Whitegate Field is not only crossed by a public footpath but is also available for informal recreational use. Wembdon Playing Field is another area of public open space in this tract of land. Other land in this area is also now the subject of public open space, proposals (see Proposal RLT4) but small areas such as at Orchard Lane are more suited to being tree planting areas. Tree planting along the edge of the Northern Distributor Road would significantly reinforce the landscape value of this strategic gap, particularly in views from the vicinity of Wembdon Common and the Church.

A long-standing road proposal, the “Bridgwater Northern Distributor Road”; and associated housing development on the north west outskirts of Bridgwater will further impact on the area between Wembdon and Bridgwater. The “Development Guide” for this scheme, adopted in 1982, clearly showed an intention to retain a “green wedge” separating the two settlements. That “green wedge” concept has subsequently been eroded by the allocation of an additional area of land for development in order to ensure completion of the road scheme, but the need to keep a strategic gap between the settlements remains an important objective in planning for development in this area.

Quantock Road (A39 western approach), Bridgwater

Development of part of Whitegate Field in conjunction with construction of the Bridgwater Northern Distributor Road has compromised the continuity of a potential green wedge/strategic gap separating Wembdon and Bridgwater.

Nevertheless the retention of open land in this area remains an important planning objective. Quantock Road (A39) enters/exits the Bridgwater urban area within the shallow folds of a ridge and valley landscape. Quantock Road cemetery marks the western edge of Bridgwater on this route, beyond which lies farmland. The area is expected to remain in agricultural use and its hedgerows and trees retained. A public footpath crosses the area and can be part of local walk circuits using footpaths and country lanes.

Canal – River Parrett Green Wedge (Somerset Bridge Area), Bridgwater

Land between the canal and the River Parrett contains a mixture of ponds (former brick clay pits, many of which are now nature conservation sites) grazing land (some of which are former tip sites) and a varied scatter of small holdings, houses and small business premises. Prior to industrial and other developments on sites in the Marsh Lane area and the Huntworth Business Park, Bridgwater’s urban edge could have been defined along the River Parrett. To the railway traveller the River still marks a significant edge.

The M5 viaduct crosses the canal, railway and river in one giant leap and whilst this is a significant feature in the landscape it is not a barrier to movement at ground level. There are public footpath routes on both banks of the River Parrett and on the canal towpath, all of which offer opportunities for walks out into surrounding countryside. The canal towpath and one of the riverside paths now form part of the National Cycle Network.

At present the wedge of land between the canal and the river is relatively undeveloped and users of these paths (particularly the canal towpath) benefit from a sense of greenspace and openness which this green wedge brings close into the heart of town. However, part of the area has previously been allocated for development. The Bridgwater Area Local Plan allocated 13 hectares of land for industrial, warehouse and business use (Proposal BR/E7). The principle of releasing this land for development has been retained in this Local Plan, but in view of the new emphasis on the significance of land between the canal and the river as a green wedge it is important that this development incorporates appropriate landscaping on the canal, river and public footpath frontages (see Proposal E1).
Elsewhere in this green wedge, the canal, river, ponds and reed beds already constitute a significant environmental resource for wildlife and human amenity and the grazing land is visually important greenspace. The amenity value of this green wedge will be maintained if existing grazing uses continue but alternative “green” uses such as playing fields, nature reserve or woodland would also be appropriate.

**The Meads, Bridgwater**

Expansion of Bridgwater in a westerly and southwesterly direction along the Durleigh ridge and at Hamp has left the intervening low-lying pastures of The Meads completely free from development. The area is crossed by several public footpaths which are easily accessible by local residents. The pastoral landscape with drainage ditches and willow trees so characteristic of the Somerset Levels and Moors reaches close into the heart of the Town and can be particularly appreciated from the Hamp footpath/cycle route and the canal. A particularly significant attribute of this green wedge is that users of the canal and its towpath (which is well-used by local people and is also part of the “River Parrett Trail”) can enjoy a superb view across the meadows towards the Quantock Hills. Real countryside can be appreciated from this location less than half a mile from the Town Centre.

The defined green wedge is generally limited to the low-lying land but also includes fields on the flanks of the Durleigh ridge which are a significant element in the view from the canal and land in the vicinity of the Enmore Road/Durleigh Road junction where there is a clear and important interface between town and surrounding countryside. Land within the green wedge is expected to remain in agricultural use. Management which reinforces the area’s Somerset Levels and Moors landscape and nature conservation attributes should be encouraged (see also Sedgemoor Biodiversity Action Plan).

**Bridgwater’s Eastern Edge/M5 Corridor**

In 1900 land east of the railway line was largely open countryside. Expansion of Bridgwater during the 20th Century has reached a defined edge at Bower Lane/Dunwear Lane.

The M5 motorway skirts this side of town with an intervening buffer of flat farmland which is generally 200-300 metres wide but is as little as 150 metres at one point. The land is mainly of ‘good’ or ‘moderate’ agricultural land quality (Grades 3a and 3b) and is generally a landscape of green fields with hedgerows.

The area is clearly visible from the motorway and whilst houses on the edge of Bridgwater are not entirely hidden by existing hedgerows and trees, the impression from the motorway remains predominantly rural. Several of the farmhouses are indeed typical of a Somerset style and are attractive features, particularly in views from the north bound carriageway.

The area is crossed at two points by public footpaths but its function as accessible countryside at the urban edge is also appreciated by walking, cycling or driving along Bower Lane or Dunwear Lane. These lanes are open to traffic but are potentially of increasing significance as a local link to the National Cycle Network at Dunwear.

Development potential in this area is seriously constrained by highway capacity problems on Bath Road and Westonzoyland Road (Bridgwater Land use and Transport Study 1997 refers) and motorway noise, but even if such constraints could be overcome it is clear that urban development in any part of this corridor would adversely affect both:

1. a) perceptions of Bridgwater and Somerset from the M5; and
2. b) the ability of residents on the east side of Bridgwater to gain access to a countryside environment within walking distance of home.

For these reasons the Development Boundary at Bower Lane/Dunwear Lane is considered to be the appropriate long term eastern edge of Bridgwater between the River Parrett and Bath Road.

**River Parrett/Chilton Trinity Green Wedge, Bridgwater**

A continuous public footpath route exists on the west bank of the River Parrett all the way from Bridgwater to Combwich and beyond. The existing right of way on the east bank is discontinuous, but there are proposals to extend a cycle
route along the top of the flood bank as part of a long-distance coast-to-coast recreational route. Despite the presence of industrial and other built up development in Bridgwater and the impending development of land at Express Park, the river corridor offers a very significant opportunity for interesting walks and contact with nature. Saltlands Community Woodland and a network of footpaths in the Chilton Trinity area through a mosaic of farmland and ponds (former brick clay pits) which are now fishing lakes and nature reserves provide a range of recreational opportunities.

Development at Chilton Trinity is not proposed in this Plan, but it is nevertheless important to establish this green wedge as part of the strategic framework of long-term restraint around Bridgwater.

**Bridgwater/North Petherton Strategic Gap**

The Huntworth Business Park and the allocation of substantial areas of land at Dawes Farm and Willstock Farm for new housing development in the Bridgwater Area Local Plan already represent a major southerly expansion of Bridgwater.

The distance between Huntworth roundabout on the A38 (M5 junction 24 access road) and North Petherton is a little over half a mile. The area is not entirely free from development - in particular the petrol filling station/transport cafe on the eastern side of the A38 is visually intrusive - but it is a significant strategic gap. Extensive views across the surrounding landscape are available (e.g. to the Quantock Hills, and across the Levels and Moors to the wooded escarpment at Aller), there are several attractive farmsteads set back from the road and the fields contain several large oak trees.

**Brean - Brean Down Strategic Gap**

Whether viewed from the beaches at Brean and Weston-Super-Mare, from the levels at Bleadon and Lympsham or higher vantage points such as Bleadon Hill and Brent Knoll, Brean Down is a major landmark feature. Unspoilt by development, this outlier of the Mendip Hills juts out into the Bristol Channel, pointing directly at the island of Steep Holm. It is owned by the National Trust and its airy coastal location, wildlife, views and open access make Brean Down a natural target for thousands of visitors each year.

The northern end of the Village Development Boundary at Brean lies 1500 metres from the foot of Brean Down. This is a very important strategic gap which has since the mid-1960s been subject of attempts to prevent further development under the terms of the Somerset Coastal Preservation Policy. The policy quite properly aimed to prevent new developments which would damage Somerset’s coastal scenery.

The Somerset Coastal Preservation Policy was included in the original versions of the Somerset Structure Plan, operative 1982-1992, but is no longer included. The Burnham-on-Sea Area Local Plan (adopted 1990) showed the boundaries of that policy area, but in the absence of a county-wide parent policy and mindful of the need to avoid a confusing array of local landscape designations, the new Local Plan deals with this area as a “strategic gap”.

The approach to the control of development in this area must remain resolutely restrictive. Virtually all of the thousands of visitors who come to Brean Down arrive by car and there is only one way in - via the coast road from Brean. It is most unfortunate that that Somerset Coastal Preservation Policy was too late to prevent three very prominent roadside caravan sites which had already been established in this area. The District Council cannot force the removal of these existing, but inappropriately located, caravan sites without facing a huge compensation bill. Nevertheless it is clear that these sites have a major adverse impact on views from Brean Down and the approach to Brean Down. Prevention of any further intrusive developments in the vicinity of Brean Down is entirely justified.

**Brean, Berrow and north Burnham Coastal Edge**

With its vast sandy beaches the District’s coastal edge at Brean and Berrow has become a major focus of tourism development. The beaches are backed by a broad belt of sand dunes at north Burnham and Berrow, but this dune belt gradually tapers northwards.

The relatively narrow areas of dunes at Brean and Berrow where the beaches are in easy reach of the coast road were early targets for a mix of residential, caravan and camping uses from the 1930’s onwards. This initially sporadic develop-
ment rapidly intensified along the coast road, but a notional “seaward building line” was established in 1958 and subsequently incorporated in the Somerset Coastal Preservation Policy. This has been largely successful in preventing development in dune areas directly fronting onto and visible from the beach.

The Brean village development boundary includes residential plots which extend into the dune area but significant built development will be limited by the seaward building line which is now incorporated as the boundary of the land affected by Policy CNE4.

Much of the Berrow Dunes area is occupied by the golf links of the Burnham and Berrow Golf Club and is also protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Green Edge, Burnham-on-Sea

The line of the existing/proposed eastern distributor road forms a defined edge to the eastwards expansion of Burnham-on-Sea and could ultimately become the main holiday access route linking Brean and Berrow to the M5. Defining this road as a long-term edge of urban development will retain a significant piece of Levels landscape as part of the setting of the town. Views of the imposing profile of the isolated hill of Brent Knoll standing above the coastal levels landscape are a distinctive and memorable feature of this locality. North of Stoddens Road, Crooked Lane and Brent Broad are important countryside access routes for casual walking or access to Brent Knoll and the “green edge” therefore specifically includes these features.

Green Edge, Fields at Mark

The approach to Mark village from Mark Causeway (B3139) has a natural vista which focuses on the church tower. This view opens out across the fields as the road turns at Abbotts Causeway, where a roadside amenity area with seating offers the opportunity for local people and visitors to pause and enjoy the attractive scene. The tranquil view across open fields to the church is the primary focus, with farmhouse and traditional outbuildings as important additional features. The rhyne in the foreground and grazing meadows often have ducks, swans, sheep or cattle adding interest to the scene. The availability of these attractive views is dependent upon the fields remaining undeveloped and the long-term protection of this policy is therefore necessary. The area should remain in agricultural use.

Green Edge, Fields at East Brent

Fields adjacent to the A370 at East Brent provide an important sense of openness which allows travellers on the main road to pass almost imperceptibly through the village. The open fields allow the village to maintain a strong visual relationship with the local landmark feature of Brent Knoll and provide an attractive setting for the war memorial.

Green Edge, Brent Knoll

Fields at the junction of Brent Street and Station Road form an important visual break within a long linear village which has largely built-up road frontages. Views from the vicinity of this junction are across a typical Somerset Levels and Moors landscape with rhynes and willow trees.

Green Wedges, Cannington

Open land in the vicinity of Cannington Brook makes an important contribution to the character of this historic settlement. In addition to the village green areas between the bridges at Brook Street warranting protection under the terms of Policy BE7, the brookside areas to the east and west merit recognition and protection as green wedges. Both are accessible by well-used public footpaths. The eastern wedge includes grassland, mature trees and the water-side setting of the historic Gurney Manor. The sound of water tumbling over the weir and the presence of ducks add to the charm of this area.

Green Edge, Cheddar

An area of small fields on the flank of the Mendip Hills on the north side of Cheddar, known locally as the Hamfield Area, is not included in the designated Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. However, the area is an integral part of the Mendip scarp slope landscape and this rising ground is considered to be an area into which Cheddar village should not expand.
Green Edges, Wedmore

The green fields and woodlands on the south-facing slopes of Lascot Hill make an important contribution to the setting and character of the village. The area provides a very attractive backdrop to views of the church and historic village centre. It is also traversed by public footpaths which are important for local countryside access and offer open views down onto the village.

The pastures on the north-facing slopes below Mudgley Road / Mill Lane are crossed by public footpaths which provide attractive views across the Cheddar Valley to the Mendip Hills. These pastures and the well-treed gardens and orchards rising behind the properties on Combe Batch (B3139) are clearly visible from the footpaths on Lascot Hill or when approaching Wedmore from Cheddar on the B3151. Built development on these slopes would be unduly prominent and detrimental to the village's rural setting.
## A Guide to Native Trees and Shrubs

### TREES

- **Ash** (*Fraxinus excelsior*)
- **Aspen** (*Populus tremula*)
- **Beech** (*Fagus sylvatica*)
- **Black Poplar** (*Populus nigra*)
- **Common Alder** (*Alnus glutinosa*)
- **Common Oak** (*Quercus robur*)
- **Crab-apple** (*Malus sylvestris*)
- **Crack Willow** (*Salix fragilis*)
- **Downy Birch** (*Betula pubescens*)
- **Field Maple** (*Acer campestre*)
- **Hornbeam** (*Carpinus betulus*)
- **Large-leaved Lime** (*Tilia platyphyllos*)
- **Mountain Ash** (*Sorbus aucuparia*)
- **Scots Pine** (*Pinus sylvestris*)
- **Sessile Oak** (*Quercus petraea*)
- **Silver Birch** (*Betula pendula*)
- **Small-leaved Lime** (*Tilia cordata*)
- **Whitebeam** (*Sorbus aria*)
- **White Willow** (*Salix alba*)
- **Wild Cherry** (*Prunus avium*)
- **Wild Service Tree** (*Sorbus domestica*)
- **Wych Elm** (*Ulmus glabra*)
- **Yew** (*Taxus baccata*)

### SHRUBS

- **Alder Buckthorn** (*Frangula alnus*)
- **Blackthorn** (*Prunus spinosa*)
- **Broom** (*Cytisus scoparius*)
- **Butchers Broom** (*Ruscus aculeatus*)
- **Dogwood** (*Cornus sanguinea*)
- **Goat Willow** (*Salix caprea*)
- **Guelder Rose** (*Viburnum opulus*)
- **Hawthorn** (*Crataegus monogyna*)
- **Hazel** (*Corylus avellana*)
- **Holly** (*Ilex aquifolium*)
- **Osier** (*Salix viminalis*)
- **Privet** (*Ligustrum vulgare*)
- **Purging Buckthorn** (*Rhamnus cathartica*)
- **Sea Buckthorn** (*Hippophae rhamnoides*)
- **Spindle** (*Euonymus europaeus*)
- **Wayfaring Tree** (*Viburnum lantana*)

### OTHER SPECIES

Early introductions usually considered acceptable in small numbers:

- **English Elm** (*Ulmus procera*)
- **Grey Poplar** (*Populus canescens*)
- **Holm Oak** (*Quercus ilex*)
- **Swedish Whitebeam** (*Sorbus intermedia*)
- **Sweet Chestnut** (*Castanea sativa*)
- **Sycamore** (*Acer pseudoplatanus*)
- **True Service Tree** (*Sorbus domestica*)
- **Walnut** (*Juglans regia*)
- **White Poplar** (*Populous alba*)

Later introductions which because of their aesthetic merits in appropriate locations can be considered acceptable in small numbers:

- **Common Lime** (*Tilia x europaea*)
- **Horse Chestnut** (*Aesculus hippocastanum*)
- **London Plane** (*Platanus x acerifolia*)
- **Norway Maple** (*Acer platanoides*)
Shoreline Management Plans

Today it is appreciated that processes operating on the coastline largely occur within distinct lengths of coast (sediment cells). The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), who are responsible for overseeing and partially funding coast protection and flood defence for the Government, has produced guidelines for the development of Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) within these sediment cells. SMPs promote co-operation between Local Authorities, the Environment Agency and other organisations involved with the defence of the coast from erosion or flooding.

SMPs are documents that lay the strategy for sustainable coastal defence. These Plans provide details on a wide range of issues including coastal processes, natural environment, planning issues, coastal defence needs and current and future land-use. SMPs assist those responsible for coastal defence to formulate planning strategies and control future development of the shoreline. Flood and coastal defence authorities will consult the SMP in developing coastal defence strategies. DEFRA has identified the following key steps in the development of a SMP:

**Stage 1** - to identify all those with an interest in the area, collate and analyse data on all key issues, set management objectives for the Plan area.

**Stage 2** - to define management units; appraise strategic coastal defence options, consult on the preferred strategic defence options; compile the Plan.

Management Units and Implementation Lengths

The coastline of the Bridgwater Bay to Bideford Bay SMP is divided into twenty Management Units. These are further sub-divided into Implementation Lengths which are defined as ‘a length of shoreline requiring a specific coastal defence option for the future to meet the overall strategic requirements of the Management Unit’.

The Coastal Defence Options

Coastal defence methods range from hard, structure types like large rocks and seawalls to soft schemes like beach nourishment. A strategic option for each Implementation Length is determined after considering its probable effect on the adjacent shoreline and based on the objectives of the Plan. The defence strategy for each Management Unit consists of the strategies for its component lengths. These are determined from four general options:

- **Do nothing**
  carry out no coastal defence works except for safety measures.

- **Hold the line**
  maintain or upgrade the level of protection provided by the existing defences, or build new defences along the existing frontage.

- **Advance the line**
  build new defences seawards of the existing position.

- **Managed retreat**
  adopt a more landward defence position.

Strategy selection requires sound understanding of current coastal processes to ensure its appropriateness. However, in some areas processes are not fully understood, so strategy adoption requires further knowledge. Thus a fifth option has been developed:

- **Observe and Monitor**
  undertake a period of more detailed examination of the shoreline to provide a sound baseline for selection of the preferred defence option in the future.

In conjunction with this the SMP contains a number of recommendations for future research, studies and monitoring.

The preferred coastal defence strategy for each of the 20 Management Units is presented in this leaflet. (Two of these are relevant to Sedgemoor District, as set out below).

**Hinkley Point to River Brue (PARR)**

This south side of Bridgwater Bay, from Hinkley Point, includes the banks of the River Parrett as far upstream as Combwich. Except for areas at
Appendix 8.3
Sedgemoor District Local Plan

Hinkley Point, Stolford and Combwich, the whole of this unit lies within the flood plain. Hinkley Point Power Station is a major contributor to the local economy and also provides a tourist attraction. Agriculture continues to dominate the coast east of Hinkley Point, with small settlements at Stolford and Steart. On the west bank of the River Parrett is the small village of Combwich which has harbour facilities. Land on the east bank of the River Parrett and south of Burnham-on-Sea is also agricultural, helping to sustain the areas second largest employer. On the east bank the villages of Pawlett, Stretcholt, Huntspill and Alstone lie within flood plains. The entire intertidal area of this unit is of international nature conservation importance, along with some terrestrial habitats, mainly recognising its importance for migrant bird populations. Most of the frontage is also part of a National Nature Reserve.

Six Implementation Lengths (*NB two of the six lengths are outside Sedgemoor District) have been defined for this Unit. Hold the line strategies are preferred for the majority of the frontage, primarily to prevent flooding of property, land and habitats. These frontages will primarily be held by maintenance of existing defence structures, although some long term improvement may be necessary to maintain defence standards. Observe and Monitor is proposed for the shoreline between Stolford and Fenning Island, and on the West bank of the River Parrett to Combwich. This will allow for site specific consideration of managed retreat on the undeveloped frontages, to promote saltmarsh growth for nature conservation and defence purposes. Further study of the natural defence system within this unit is advocated to assess evolutionary trends.

Burnham-on-Sea to Brean Down (BURN)

The intertidal flats fronting the whole of this unit, between the River Brue and Brean Down, are of international nature conservation importance. There is uninterrupted development throughout the whole of the Management Unit, albeit a mixture of residential, commercial, tourism and leisure interests. Burnham-on-Sea is the largest development on this west facing stretch of coastline. To the north and adjacent to Berrow Flats, are the tourist developments at Berrow and Brean. Berrow is fronted by a large area of SSSI designated dunes and a golf course. Limited dunes, of local conservation importance, continue north in front of Brean. This development consists predominantly tourist developments and is the second largest site in the country for touring caravans. Brean Down to the north is an undeveloped headland of high nature conservation and amenity value. Five Implementation Lengths have been defined for this unit. The frontages of Burnham, the holiday camp to the south and Brean have “hold the line” strategies, which will largely be achieved through maintenance of the existing defences. However, at Burnham a study is required to assess movement of the River Parrett channel and its implications for long term foreshore and defence stability. The currently undefended dune section in the north of Burnham should also be studied, to establish any need for future intervention. At Brean, monitoring is also required to assess the levels of fronting beach and dunes, which are integral to the present defence system and steps taken were they to significantly lower. Observe and monitor is promoted for Berrow Dunes to assess their natural evolution, the long term protection offered to developments at Berrow and their possible role as a source of material for the remainder of the unit. This will involve a comprehensive study extending over the entire Management Unit, building upon previous studies of past evolution to analyse shoreline movements at a much more detailed level. For Brean Down the strategy is, do nothing.
Appendix 9.1
Sedgemoor District Local Plan

Design Statements for New Development

Policy BE1 (Built Environment Chapter) provides for all new development to demonstrate how the design process and proposals have addressed a range of issues to promote environmental sustainability. This assessment is to comprise a Design Statement to be submitted as part of applications for planning permission. The issues to be addressed in the Design Statement are set out below, together with guidance as to practical design applications. The extent to which issues listed can be addressed will be dependant on the nature, size and content of the proposal etc. Clearly, there will be greater scope and need to address more of the issues with larger and more complicated development proposals. However, the checklist will serve as structured and detailed approach to the consideration of development and to allow for the creative application of design issues.

NATURAL RESOURCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Objectives for Development</th>
<th>Design Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bio-diversity and Carbon Fixing</td>
<td>Conserve and Enhance:</td>
<td>• carry out biodiversity survey;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ecological sites, wildlife areas, habitats, drainage regimes</td>
<td>• conservation of existing woodlands, copse and hedgerows;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• promote green corridors within development; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• promote indigenous planting, habitat creation to reinforce landscape structure for carbon fixing, windbreaks, local flora and fauna for character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Maximise sustainable supply:</td>
<td>• identify flood plains, potential for use as water storage, habitats, recreation, reed bed technology;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• avoid floodable areas</td>
<td>• identify technical supply capacity; and potential for dual supplies of ‘white’ and grey systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• use of capacity in existing supply and ground water abstraction</td>
<td>• investigate on and off site solutions for run-off storage for slow release/filtration habitat creation, natural cleansing;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• incorporate permeable hard surfaces for slow filtration (assess natural porosity of land);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximise sustainable disposal:</td>
<td>• identify technical capacity and potential for other forms of treatment eg reed bed technology; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• avoid excessive surface run-off</td>
<td>• identify, incorporate and enhance natural drainage regimes within overall design to reinforce local landscape setting, structure and biodiversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• use of capacity in surface and foul drainage systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• conserve natural drainage regimes</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Design Statements for New Development (continued)

#### NATURAL RESOURCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Objectives for Development</th>
<th>Design Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td><strong>Maximise Re-Use:</strong></td>
<td>• positively include derelict, underused land for development or restoration for local benefit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• of derelict/underused land</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Conserve:</strong></td>
<td>• identify agricultural land quality and micro-variations for areas of potential allotments, garden areas or local food production (by local trust or co-operative);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• high grade soils/high quality agricultural land; and</td>
<td>• consider potential for non-development uses (planting, woodland);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• areas of high intensity food production.</td>
<td>• identify land forms/slopes with potential for passive solar gain; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Avoid:</strong></td>
<td>• establish particular desired view features into development (eg landmark buildings, landscape features) and out of development to influence layout or structure. Identify ridgelines for possible restriction of development (eg possibly because of excessive winds, thermal inefficiency and visual effect on development).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• unstable, contaminated land, need for “cut and fill” construction; and</td>
<td>• identify potential pollutants and wider sources which might influence development layout and location of uses (Health and Safety Executive, Environmental Health);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• recyclable or virgin mineral resources.</td>
<td>• safeguard existing tree lines, structural hedgerows, landform features which block or filter pollution/winds; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Identify:</strong></td>
<td>• consider location, scale and intensity of uses which would generate pollution or environmental aggravation to established (existing) development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• landform potential for solar design; and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• views, viewpoints, ridgelines.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollution and Hazard:</td>
<td><strong>Minimise Impact:</strong></td>
<td>• identify potential pollutants and wider sources which might influence development layout and location of uses (Health and Safety Executive, Environmental Health);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• of excessive levels of existing or potential air/noise pollution;</td>
<td>• safeguard existing tree lines, structural hedgerows, landform features which block or filter pollution/winds; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• of vibration;</td>
<td>• consider location, scale and intensity of uses which would generate pollution or environmental aggravation to established (existing) development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• with natural barriers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Minimise Creation:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• by proposed development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Design Statements for New Development (continued)

### ENERGY AND MOVEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Objectives for Development</th>
<th>Design Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Accessibility and linkages** | Identify needs for sustainable movement:  
  - to facilities (schools, shops, open spaces employment etc);  
  - for walking/cycling and infrastructure, within and beyond development; and  
  - good public transport integration. | Identify existing and planned off-site facilities (“attractors”) for potential movement corridors and desired linkage to facilities within development.
Movement corridors to strongly inform the structure of development for location of facilities, mixed uses, open space network and pedestrian accessibility to facilities (optimum 400 yards walking distance). |

Relegate roads:  
- in favour of building and pedestrian dominated development;  
- with built-in traffic calming; and  
- to the minimum necessary, with a logical hierarchy. |

- identify the most efficient, direct and attractive pedestrian and cycle corridors within the topography of the site;  
- integrate walking/cycling routes within ‘overlooking’ housing for informal surveillance and to reinforce the perception of safety;  
- combine routes with green corridors/open space network;  
- explore potential for developer contributions for pedestrian/cycling network beyond site to enhance linkage to facilities etc;  
- secure the earliest involvement of public transport operators as basic part of design process to inform infrastructure provision and integration with facilities, establish developer contribution for operation of services from the earliest time in the build period;  
- design the public transport network and associated facilities to guide the location of higher housing densities (eg densities graded away from facilities); location of facilities and services (retail, service trades etc) concentrated around public transport ‘nodes’;  
- adopt a design culture for promoting a building and pedestrian dominated environment foremost which relegates the provision of roads and car related infrastructure to the minimum necessary and which promotes streets;  
- provide for in-built traffic calming by frequent changes in horizontal road alignment as basic design principle. |
### Design Statements for New Development (continued)

#### ENERGY AND MOVEMENT (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Objectives for Development</th>
<th>Design Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accessibility and linkages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ie short lengths of roads up to 60m with a significant change of direction) for 20mph speed limit reinforced by building configurations and which promote townscape, visual and architectural interest; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>provide legible hierarchy of roads which creates a network to allow for directness of route (less car travel time) but deviation from route to accommodate pedestrian priority facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Energy Strategy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Identify:</strong></td>
<td>assess location, density and range of nearby existing uses for technical potential to introduce district heating etc. (in association with energy agencies/LA21 forums);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● potential for District Heating combined heat and power;</td>
<td>establish desired minimum targets for energy efficient building construction with appropriate bodies; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● energy targets for building design; and</td>
<td>site topography and landscape structure to indicate areas for future solar design and building orientations (selected to building type eg terraces, detached) and areas of existing potential shelter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● potential for passive solar design.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Design Statements for New Development (continued)

#### STRUCTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Objectives for Development</th>
<th>Design Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Concept                | Define objectives and the overall concept for the development                              | • adopt an analytical approach to the assessment of natural resources and energy/movement issues which will inform the general locations for uses. Development may provide several options for a structure and benefits and 'trade-offs'; should be assessed to provide different overall measurements for sustainability;  
• creation of a strong and well-defined physical structure for development will provide the basis for strong character;  
• a concept plan and masterplan will provide basic locations for uses by identifying energy efficient networks, public transport integration, areas or locations for mixed uses, facilities and density structure; and  
• provide for appropriate and considered relationships (physical and uses) between the 'edges' of the development and adjoining areas. |
| Open Space Network     | Provide:  
• purposeful facilities on an accessible network with linkages beyond the development; and  
• potential for reed bed technology, flood control, shelter belts, food production. | • design for open space network within development which reinforces or creates links to adjacent areas and beyond;  
• design for a wide variety of facilities linked to the network which caters for different age ranges, with attractive and safe pedestrian accessibility; and  
• identify areas for integration of water treatment as part of development (or close by) which also provides an accessible amenity. Involve technical bodies (Environment Agency, Drainage Boards) in early stages of the design process. |
| Built Environment      | Conserve existing:  
• potential for re-use of existing buildings and maximising the re-use and recycling of building materials within new development; and  
• potential to use spare infrastructure capacity. | • identify existing structures (including archaeology / historic buildings) for possible incorporation within development by repair / rehabilitation/conversion to add to range of built forms and provide historic linkage; |
### Design Statements for New Development (continued)

#### STRUCTURE (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Objectives for Development</th>
<th>Design Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Built Environment (continued)** | **Build in quality and sustainability:** | - identify spare capacity for existing sewers, roads and drainage to conserve additional energy / costs of construction or unnecessary infrastructure;  
- identify the main building styles and traditions (with appropriate context appraisal) to establish an evolutionary process to building form for the desired character of new development (eg basic building forms and 'language', architectural styles, massing, local details, plot characteristics and 'local' grain etc.);  
- establish basic built forms with design guidance with clear reasons (eg wide and narrow front terrace, wide frontage /shallow depth dwellings, pavilion styles etc) related to contribution to street structure, townscape, local styles, solar design or density locations; and to create a wide range of accommodation;  
- building forms which create street structures and which promote the role of the pedestrian;  
- define building treatments which play positive townscape functions for different density areas eg continuous frontages (high density), linked frontages (medium / low density), land marks, corner buildings, enclosed/courtyard forms, ‘focus view’ buildings etc;  
- create a positive and varied range of linked external spaces (or public realm);  
- identify construction materials (and sources) which ties the development to the locality;  
- provide detailed guidance for good domestic design principles eg public and private areas for the plot (defensible space), privacy and security (use of boundaries/screening);  
- incorporate construction which allows for some adaptability (eg flexible internal layouts, use of loft areas, ground floor access to external areas); and  
- provide opportunities for home-based working and other facilities (eg workshops /studios). |

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*Appendix 9.1  
Sedgemoor District Local Plan*
Outdoor Sports and Children's Playing Space: Review of existing facilities in Sedgemoor

This Appendix summarises the results of a survey of facilities in the District. Further details are available in a Local Plan Background Paper “Review of Playing Fields, Play Areas and Open Spaces” (June 1999).

The original survey was carried out in 1998/9, and set out to assess provision in the District against the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) “6 acre standard”. At its broadest level, the survey allows us to assess on a parish-by-parish basis whether NPFA targets for the total amount of “outdoor playing space” are achieved. Such results are shown below in Table 1, but a more localised interpretation of the actual play and sport opportunities available and of accessibility could reveal other deficiencies even in parishes that might appear to have adequate land.

Sites relevant to this survey will be protected under the provisions of Policy RLT1 and are amongst the sites identified on the Proposals Map.

The initial key findings of the assessment of total available “outdoor playing space” are:

- Bridgwater has a significant deficiency of outdoor sports facilities. Relevant sites within the parish boundary total less than 30 hectares, whereas the NPFA target for a town of this size is 54.26 hectares. Even when six sports facilities located in adjacent parishes are added in, the total remains less than 39 hectares - or about 70% of the NPFA target.

To meet NPFA standards Bridgwater requires about 15 hectares of additional outdoor sports facilities. Anticipated population growth arising from around 3,000 new houses (from existing commitments at Northern Distributor Road, South Bridgwater, other permissions and forecast brownfield sites) which could be built by the year 2011 will be in the region of 7,500. This will generate a need for about a further 12 hectares.

According to NPFA standards Bridgwater may therefore need a total of 27 hectares of additional outdoor sports space by the year 2011.

- Bridgwater does not have a satisfactory total supply of children’s play space (22.07 hectares compared with a target of 27.13 hectares) and local accessibility and adequacy of equipped play areas is variable.

- Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge outdoor sports facilities are about 20% below NPFA targets (23.64 hectares compared with a target of 29.44 hectares).

- Children’s play space at Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge exceeds NPFA targets (16 hectares compared with a target of 14.72 hectares).

- Cheddar’s outdoor sports facilities exceed NPFA targets (14.7 hectares compared with a target of 8.15 hectares) but children’s play space is deficient (1.25 hectares compared with a target of 4.07 hectares).

- The figures are presented on a parish basis but sports pitch catchments and some play facility catchments may cross boundaries. Therefore, such statistics are not necessarily a conclusive guide to the adequacy of provision. In the rural parishes the range of sport opportunities may be very limited (i.e. in small parishes a single cricket pitch may be the sole facility but create an apparent excess of provision).

- A Playing Pitch Strategy for the District was commissioned in 2004 (publication anticipated 2005) and may become a further source of information.
### Table 1 Outdoor Sports and Children’s Playing Space: Summary of existing provision in Sedgemoor Parishes

This table summarises the results of assessment against the National Playing Field Association “Six Acre Standard”, which recommends that there should be 2.4 hectares of playing field per 1000 population comprising:

- a) 1.6 hectares of outdoor playing space for sport, and
- b) 0.8 hectares of children’s playing space.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Population 2001 Census</th>
<th>Outdoor Sport</th>
<th>Children’s Play Area</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001 Census</td>
<td>Target (ha)</td>
<td>Actual (ha)</td>
<td>Target (ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashcott</td>
<td>1248</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axbridge</td>
<td>2025</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagworth</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bawdrip</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berrow</td>
<td>1638</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
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### Table 1 Outdoor Sports and Children’s Playing Space: Summary of existing provision in Sedgemoor Parishes

This table summarises the results of assessment against the National Playing Field Association “Six Acre Standard”, which recommends that there should be 2.4 hectares of playing field per 1000 population comprising:

a) 1.6 hectares of outdoor playing space for sport, and

b) 0.8 hectares of children’s playing space.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Outdoor Sport</th>
<th>Children's Play Area</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001 Census</td>
<td>Target (ha)</td>
<td>Actual (ha)</td>
<td>Target (ha)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Shapwick</td>
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<td>Westonzyoland</td>
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<td><strong>169.41</strong></td>
<td><strong>141.50</strong></td>
<td><strong>84.70</strong></td>
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</table>

**Note:**
The original survey was carried out in 1998/9. Figures in this table have been updated to:

i) include 2001 census population figures.

ii) amend targets to reflect census figures and new(2001) NPFA guidance.

iii) make corrections to the recorded site information where changes or errors have been identified.

A Local Area for Play (LAP) is a small area of open space for young children (mainly up to 6 years old) to play close to where they live. The activity zone should be reasonably flat, have a grass surface, and have a minimum area of 100m². There should be seating for carers and appropriate landscaping/buffer zones.

A Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) is a play area equipped for children of early school age (mainly 4-8 year olds). The activity zone should have a minimum area of 400m², with grass playing space and at least five types of play equipment with appropriate safety surfacing. There should also be seating for accompanying adults.

A Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) is a play area for mainly older children which should include an area for ball games or wheeled activities, 8 types of play equipment appropriate to children in this age group and seating. This requires an activity zone of at least 1000m².

Buffer zones are necessary around LEAPs and NEAPs in particular to reduce potential disturbance to nearby households. Distances of 10 metres and 30 metres respectively between the edge of the “activity zone” and the boundary of the nearest residential property are recommended. This will mean that the potential total area required for a LEAP may be about 1,600m² and for a NEAP 8,400m². These buffer zones could include footpaths and planted areas, planting schemes which create wildlife habitat and thereby add to our stock of accessible natural greenspace within the urban areas will be particularly appropriate (see also CNE11 – urban greenspace network).

Detailed recommendations on play area design can be found in NPFA publications, but the following pointers on siting and design are derived from page 26 of their 2001 publication “The Six Acre Standard”.

As a matter of general practice, children’s play areas should be:

- Accessible within the specified walking time:
  - Local Area for Play
    - 1 minute (100 metres)
  - Local equipped Area for Play
    - 5 minutes (400 metres)
  - Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play
    - 15 minutes (1000 metres)

- Sited in open, welcoming locations and not be tucked away on backland sites with access via narrow alleys or paths enclosed by high fences.
- Separated from areas of major vehicle movements and accessible directly from pedestrian routes.
- Sited on land suitable for the types of play opportunity intended. For example, slopes that are too steep for building can provide one kind of experience, but are not suitable for most play equipment. Conversely, a flat area can provide too bland a setting for some types of equipment.
- Designed so that high climbing apparatus or equipment on mounds is sited as far as possible from nearby dwellings.
- Sufficiently far from dwellings to reduce the likelihood of noise and disturbance, particularly to households without children.
- Integrated, as far as possible, with other open spaces and areas of amenity planting to provide appropriate separation from nearby dwellings.
- Overlooked from dwellings or pedestrian routes that are well used.
- Accessible by footpaths with a firm surface. However, footpaths should not pass through the play area.
- Surfaced in a manner that is able to withstand the intensity of use.
- Provided with seating for parents and carers. Where footpaths with a firm surface link adult seating areas to the entrance, their colour or texture should be different to other hard surfaced parts of the play area. The space occupied by these footpaths and planted areas should not normally exceed 10% of the area of the activity zone in order to provide adequate room for children’s play.
- Fitted with play equipment that has been designed, manufactured, installed and maintained in full accordance with EN1176,
EN1177 and BS7188. Fencing, including gates, seating and all other fixtures should similarly be in accordance.

- Provided with impact-absorbing surfaces beneath and around all play equipment.
- Designed with appropriate physical features on the perimeter of the activity zone to exclude dogs.
Examples of LAP’s