

**South Somerset District Council
Sustainability Appraisal Report of
emerging South Somerset Local Plan
2006-2028
Addendum**



January 2013

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This addendum has been prepared to supplement the Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal (SA) report which will accompany the Local Plan when it is submitted to the Secretary of State. It sets out how SA has been considered in relation to the proposed amendments being suggested to some of the policies in the 'Proposed Submission Local Plan' (June 2012), following consideration of representations and updated evidence base.
- 1.2 The proposed amendments do not involve any fundamental change to the strategy for development or introduce new policies or proposals. Amendments to a number of policies are being recommended by the Council, the majority of which are minor textual changes. However, some of the changes being proposed relate to minor changes to both housing and employment figures, and potential locations for development – these have been subject to more detailed consideration.

2. Outline of the proposed amendments

- 2.1 The amendments to the Proposed Submission Local Plan are set out in full in appendix 2 of the main report. An outline of the policy amendments that have been subject to more detailed consideration are set out in the following bullet points. The amendments suggested elsewhere in the Plan are drafting amendments and refinements of policy wording and supporting text.
 - **Policy SS3** – increase in employment figures to reflect updated evidence on self-employment and Business Register Employment Survey (BRES) data. Reduce land provision to reflect updated evidence on employment density plot ratios.
 - **Policy SS5** – amend housing figures at the settlements to reflect reduction from 16,751 dwellings district-wide to 15,950 dwellings (to be consistent with Policy SS4 which remains unchanged).
 - **Policy SS7** – remove the sequential approach requiring brownfield development prior to consideration of greenfield development.
 - **Policy YV1** – slight reduction in housing numbers at Yeovil to reflect change to Policy SS5.
 - **Policy YV2** – reduce employment provision for the urban extension from 11 ha to 8 ha overall to reflect updated evidence (from 7 ha to 5 ha in the Plan period); and add two fields to the north west of the urban extension (at Gregg's Riding School).
 - **Policy YV3** – remove the two fields indicated above from the East Coker and North Coker Buffer Zone.

- **Policy PMT1** – reduce number of dwellings by 500 due to drafting error that included existing commitments relating to the whole of Chard and not just the strategic growth area.
- **Policy PMT2** – reduce number of dwellings by 500 due to drafting error – as PMT1 above.
- **Policy PMT3** – reduce the extent of the Direction of Growth to protect the sensitive landscape at Pretwood Hill.
- **Policy LMT2** – amend 2nd paragraph to state that development will be subject to a project level Habitats Regulations Assessment of potential impacts on the Somerset Levels and Moors Special Protection Area/Ramsar.

3. Appraisal of the proposed amendments

Policy SS3 – Delivering new employment land

3.1 The sustainability effects of the revised policy are considered to be largely similar to those set out in the original policy in the Proposed Submission Local Plan. The increase in the delivery of jobs in the District is likely to enhance the already positive economic effects of the policy. The intention to continue to balance the provision of jobs with homes will ensure more sustainable and self-contained communities. However, additional economic growth will have some negative effects through increased traffic growth and pollution which are likely to be slightly worse in the revised policy – the mitigation measures recommended to prioritise sustainable travel and focus employment development at the main settlements should ensure these are minimised to become acceptable. The slight reduction in land provision for Yeovil and the Rural Settlements will mean some environmental benefits, such as improved protection of the landscape and townscape.

Policy SS5 – Delivering new housing growth

3.2 The housing provision in Policy SS5 showing the provision for individual settlements has been reduced by 801 dwellings to be consistent with Policy SS4: District wide housing provision. The overall outcome is a slight reduction in the scale of housing to be provided in the District which, when applied to each settlement, results in minimal change. Therefore, the sustainability effects will be broadly the same as previously identified. There is slightly less potential to meet housing need with the amended policies, but environmental effects are likely to be slightly more positive.

Policy SS7 – Phasing of previously developed land

3.3 By removing the requirement for brownfield land to be developed prior to greenfield and in preference, the proposed amendment is more likely to result in greater greenfield land development. Whilst prima facie this suggests a more adverse environmental impact and impact on agricultural land take the environmental impact of brownfield development can also be significantly detrimental to weigh in the balance. The amended policy now accords with Government policy and one cannot

promote a policy on sustainability grounds that is contrary to national planning policy (unless there are specific local reasons).

Policy YV1 – Urban framework and greenfield housing provision for Yeovil

3.4 A small reduction in the number of dwellings to be delivered at Yeovil means that the effects previously identified remain valid. The negative effects on traffic and pollution should be reduced with less housing development. However, the benefits of meeting housing need and supporting the economy at Yeovil are also likely to be slightly lower.

Policy YV2 – Yeovil Sustainable Urban Extension

3.5 The proposed reduction in employment land will not lessen the positive economic effects previously identified as the revised employment density ratios will mean more jobs are being provided on a reduced amount of land. The negative environmental effects associated with developing employment land are likely to be reduced with a lower land requirement.

3.6 The relatively small increase in land area (approximately 3 ha) of the location identified for removal from the urban buffer area and potential incorporation into the Sustainable Urban Extension will not adversely impact on sustainability of the Urban extension proposal (or of the buffer zone). The scale of the Urban extension remains broadly unchanged at 2,500 dwellings and it will be for the Masterplanning process to determine specific locations for development.

Policy YV3 – East Coker and North Coker Buffer Zone

3.7 The removal of the two fields in the buffer zone, and addition to the urban extension (highlighted in 3.6 above) will have limited effects on the extent of the buffer zone. Given the land is adjacent to the urban area, it will not compromise the intention of the buffer zone to prevent coalescence with Yeovil and preserve the character of North and East Coker. The fields are classed as Best and Most Versatile Agricultural land which would be a potential negative effect should they be developed although the land is not currently used for agriculture and other high quality agricultural land may be excluded from the Urban extension in consequence.

Policy PMT1 – Chard Strategic Growth Area and PMT2 – Chard phasing

3.8 The policies as stated in the Proposed Submission Local Plan included housing figures that were 500 dwellings too high due to a drafting error. However, the SA was based upon the correct figure of approximately 2716 dwellings at the Chard Strategic Growth area – therefore the original SA outcomes remain valid.

Policy PMT3 – Ilminster Direction of Growth

3.9 Although the policy wording and general location remains the same, the extent of the direction of growth as indicated on the proposals map has been reduced. This is likely to have additional positive effects on the landscape by minimising the loss of

greenfield land, and particularly areas that have a more sensitive landscape on Pretwood Hill.

Policy LMT2 – Langport / Huish Episcopi Direction of Growth

3.10 Although the amendment to this policy is slightly less stringent in terms of biodiversity requirements, this change has been made on the advice of expert consultees (Natural England) and the policy continues to require assessment for impacts on the Somerset Levels and Moors Special Protection Area/Ramsar sites – therefore it is considered that the effects of the policy will be similar to those previously identified.

4 Conclusion

4.1 Overall, having duly considered the proposed amendments to the Proposed Submission Local Plan, it is considered that the sustainability effects are likely to be largely similar to those previously identified in the Local Plan SA report. The proposed amendments are therefore duly assessed and unchanged in consequence of the Sustainability Appraisal.