

FOBRA - Planning & Major Projects report March 2025

B&NES Local Plan 2022-2042

As previously reported, the programme for producing the next Local Plan has been delayed by the new government's revision to National Planning Policy – largely setting new targets for addressing the urgent need for more housing across the country and to stimulate economic growth.

B&NES have now published a document explaining the new programme 'Re-setting the Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan and the District-wide Spatial Strategy' and the consequent 're-launch' of conversations with key stakeholders. The increase in the housing target for the District equates to an uplift of 105% - rising from 717 new homes a year to 1,471 – a total target of 29,000 over the 20 year plan period.

To address this significant increase required, the intention is to review the most sustainable settlements in terms of best access to employment, facilities and service as well as those best served by public transport and active travel.

The City of Bath is identified as the starting point – given the acute need for affordable housing in Bath and that the city has the best range of employment, services and facilities. This could involve increasing the density of development on sites already identified and exploring any brownfield sites which may be suitable (whilst also recognising the importance of protecting the WHS and its Cotswold NP setting).

The exercise will also look at the potential of land just beyond the District boundaries such as at Hicks Gate, then Keynsham, Midsomer Norton, Radstock and Westfield. Beyond these areas they will be considering the rural villages which may have good – or potentially improved connectivity.

Four alternative strategy approaches are under consideration:

1 Urban Expansion – focusing on significant levels of growth at the best connected towns and on well-connected transport routes.

2 Sustainable Transport Corridors – growth at settlements on established key transport routes to larger settlements.

3 Development at a greater range of more sustainable villages.

4 New or substantially expanded settlement(s) at a large scale (a long-term option unlikely to deliver in the short term needed)

A new call for sites has been issued – any proposals need to be submitted by 21 March.

The updated principles for consideration are:

- Climate Change and Nature – sustainable transport connectivity; flood risk; local food production and agricultural land; biodiversity and nature recovery
- Landscape Character
- Historic Environment
- Green Belt

- Infrastructure provision
- Local character and community identity

The Government has committed additional funding in recognition of the significant resources needed to meet the new deadline of December 2026 for the submission of Local Plans for examination. (How the Inspectorate will cope with this deluge remains a mystery.) The Council is now working on the assumption that resources will be adequate to fund the work needed, including further community consultation.

Co-Living Policy

The Council has also been consulting on a draft policy on Co-Living developments which, whilst offering to help meet the general housing need in the District, are currently sui-generis and not subject to CIL contributions. The proposal is to restrict occupation to non-student occupiers, using a planning condition or legal agreement. Also to enable the Council to demand an off-site financial contribution.

Bath Rec – Rugby Stadium Proposals (23/03558/EFUL)

Representations have been submitted on behalf of FoBRA – expressing concerns in particular about the impact (noise and visual) of unqualified intended ‘events’ on neighbouring residents and across large parts of the city. It is concluded that the application should not be approved until the outstanding issues mentioned in the FoBRA submission have been satisfactorily resolved.

Jan Shepley 7 March 2025