

Welcome to the fourth issue of the Sedgemoor Local Development Framework Newsletter. This issue reports on the initial findings from the Core Strategy Preferred Options consultation, and lets you know what will happen next.

HOT NEWS

THE STRATEGIC FLOOD DEFENCE SPD is now available in its final version on our website at www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/ldf.

From 1st December 2009, the tariff is applicable to all new housing proposals at Bridgwater. It also applies to other development within high flood risk areas in Bridgwater.

HINKLEY CONSULTATION. EDF is currently consulting on its plans for a new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point, and associated development. The deadline for comments to EDF is 11th Jan, and more information is available at www.edfconsultation.info.

See page 3 for more information about the links between the Hinkley proposals and Sedgemoor's Local Development Framework.

NATIONAL GRID CONSULTATION. At the same time as EDF's consultation, National Grid are consulting on the route corridors they're suggesting for the new power lines that will be needed to connect Hinkley to the National Grid via Bridgwater and Avonmouth. This consultation finishes on the 8th Jan, and more info is available at <http://www.nationalgrid.com/uk/Electricity/MajorProjects/HinkleyConnection>

*Season's Greetings
to all our readers*



Preferred Option Consultation

A very big thank you

to all those who have already responded to our consultation. Don't forget that there is still time to do so if you haven't yet, as the deadline has been extended to **18th December**. Log on to our online consultation via our website at www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/ldf.

Events

The Planning Policy team has been busy with a series of consultation events over the past two months. The consultation was launched with a Stakeholder Forum on the 30th September. Since then we've put displays up in all the libraries in the District, explained the Preferred Options and gathered comments at drop-ins at all the Key Rural Settlements and Burnham, and talked with shoppers at Angel Place in Bridgwater, Asda in Highbridge and Morrisons in Burnham. Planning officers have spoken at parish and town council meetings and parish cluster meetings, and we have visited schools in Bridgwater and Burnham. Phew! We now feel we deserve our Christmas pudding.

The consultation has highlighted the need for one or two more focussed events in the new year, specifically around individual sites such as Junction 24, Cokerhurst and Durleigh Road. If you are on our database, you'll automatically be kept informed of these (see the back page for details of how to get your name added), or do contact us in January if you would like to know more. Comments from these events will be incorporated into the consultation despite falling outside the official deadline.

Individual responses

So far we have received almost 200 individual responses, both online and through the post. The online consultation portal seems to have been easy to use for most people, and certainly makes life a lot easier for us when it comes to processing comments.

See the following pages for some highlights and an initial indication of the main issues that are being raised.

The big issues

Spatial Strategy and Housing Distribution

There has been plenty of debate throughout the consultation on the 'Spatial Strategy' suggested in the Preferred Options Report (Preferred Option SS1). Driven largely by the regional requirement for a majority of Sedgemoor's housing development to happen at Bridgwater, it suggests relatively little development in the rest of the district.

This has been an issue particularly at Burnham and Highbridge, where town councillors have called for more development, with one suggesting that the current proposals for 1,300 new homes until 2026 represented a "slow death" for the towns.

It is also a key issue for smaller rural towns and villages. While some residents and parish councils expressed relief at the low level of new housing required in their community, others were of the opinion that new development was important in order to keep towns and villages vibrant and to maintain rural services.

Although we don't have a great deal of room to manoeuvre on housing numbers, we may be able to consider a slightly different pattern of distribution in order to take these concerns on board. We also need to consider whether small scale housing schemes that achieve a very high level of the Code for Sustainable Homes as well as other community benefits might, exceptionally, be acceptable in village locations.

Junction 24

Proposals for employment development to the east of the M5 at Huntworth have provoked the most responses on any one issue. Preferred Option BW4 suggests a 'Regional logistics site' on 22 hectares at Junction 24, as part of the RSS requirement for 86 hectares of employment land. The site would be easily accessible from the motorway and is deliverable within a short timeframe.

Objectors say that the site is on prime agricultural land; that Junction 24 is already overloaded with traffic and the development would put strain on local roads; that visually it would be intrusive, especially since there is no other significant development on the east of the M5 between Bristol and Exeter; that there are brownfield sites in the district that should be used first; and that a regional logistics site would bring relatively few jobs and would not contribute to the Council's aim of developing higher skills sectors.

The planning team are considering these comments and continuing to engage with the Junction 24 Action Group in order to help inform the next stage of the Core Strategy.

Northgate and Leisure

The closure of the Splash and future provision for leisure in Bridgwater town centre has understandably been high on the agenda throughout the consultation. Residents are keen that whatever development happens at Northgate, it should include some form of leisure provision to make up for the loss of the Splash. A mix of retail is also seen as important. The Council is currently in discussion with a potential developer for this site and is seeking to ensure that a comprehensive scheme that meets the objectives set out in Preferred Option BW6 can be delivered.

Cokerhurst and Durleigh (Preferred Option BW2)

Many residents of Wembdon were concerned to see housing development at Cokerhurst Farm back on the agenda. At the Local Plan examination in 2002, the inspector considered that it was potentially a suitable site for housing, but that it was not needed at that time.

The SHLAA has identified the need for three strategic greenfield sites at Bridgwater in order to meet current RSS requirements for 7,700 new homes in the town. Cokerhurst is one of the few potential housing sites available that is not at high risk of flooding. This, together with its good accessibility to the town centre, makes it a logical site to consider. If Cokerhurst goes forward, however, it will be important to address the concerns of Wembdon residents by ensuring that the impact of any development on the character of the village is minimised as far as possible.

The Durleigh Road site is suggested for much the same reasons: low flood risk and good accessibility. Less comments have been received about this site, however, perhaps because it doesn't have the history of the Cokerhurst site. A further consultation event is proposed for early next year in order to ensure that all have a chance to comment on the site.

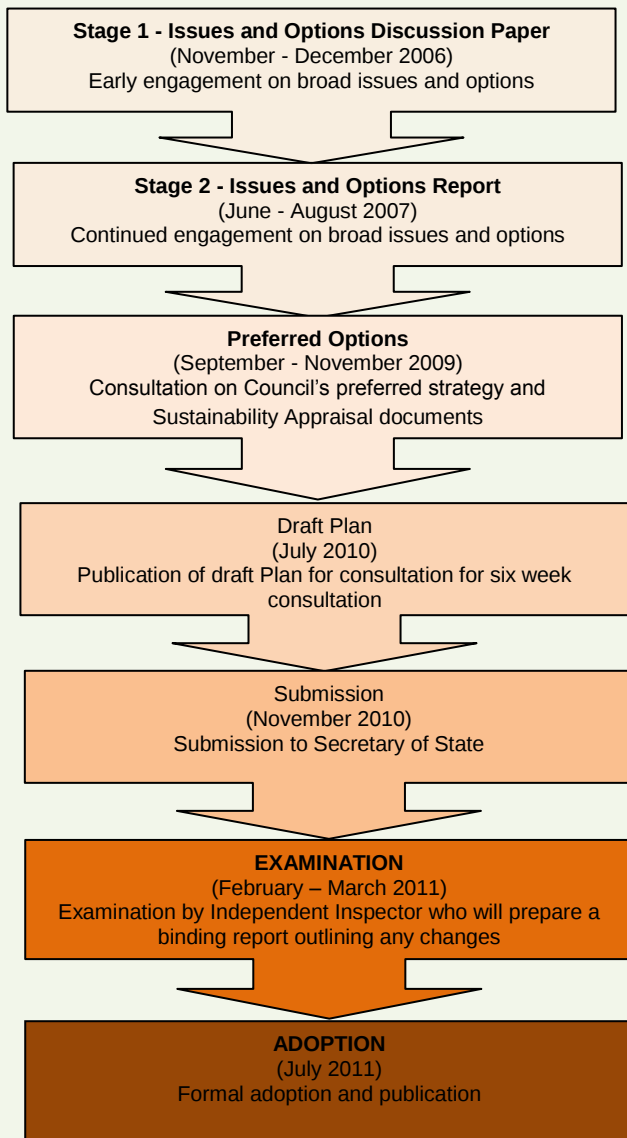
The need for these or any other greenfield sites will depend upon whether any further brownfield opportunities or more sustainable alternative development options come forward within the plan period.

So what happens next?

Our work on the Preferred Options consultation is far from over. Now we have to collate all comments and summarise them in a report before we consider our response and any changes to the Preferred Options that may be appropriate as a result of what you've told us. Along with further work on the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment (to avoid adverse impacts on sites and species of European importance), this will then inform the writing of the Draft Core Strategy which we will be consulting on next summer.

Please see the following page for our current timetable.

Progressing the Core Strategy



Spotlight on...

Hinkley Point

Given that the outcome of EDF's proposals are as yet unknown, neither the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy nor Sedgemoor's Preferred Options Report were able to take account of the impacts of new nuclear at Hinkley Point.

There will be direct implications in terms of the associated works that include temporary accommodation, park and ride sites, freight consolidation facilities, and a Cannington by-pass. The draft proposals are currently being considered by the Council and it is clear that the impact upon Cannington will be a key consideration. The Preferred Options Report identifies Cannington as a key rural settlement but does not at present envisage significant future development.

Less direct impacts relate to both the implications of up to 5,000 temporary construction workers, and the longer term demands from permanent jobs in terms of housing and employment. These include key transportation issues, demands upon leisure and social facilities, and the potential need to identify sites and premises to serve businesses associated directly or indirectly with the construction and maintenance of the plant.

The planning application for the new power station, together with associated works (see the proposals map below) is expected next summer. This will be considered by the new Infrastructure Planning Commission, and Sedgemoor District Council will be a statutory consultee. We are currently preparing our response to the first round of consultation.

It will be important for the LDF to be ready to fully incorporate the implications of whatever decision the IPC make. In order to fully understand the likely impacts, a topic paper is to be

prepared early in the new year that will be published for further consultation.

Visit www.edfconsultation.info for more information on the EDF proposals.

Key

- Hinkley Point C development site - indicative boundary
- East** Cannington bypass options - eastern and western
- West**
- Cannington North West search areas:
 - a park and ride facility for up to 900 cars
 - a freight consolidation facility
 - a spoil disposal site
- Cannington South and Central search areas:
 - accommodation up to 300 people (including Cannington College)
 - a park and ride facility for up to 900 cars
 - a freight consolidation facility
- Junction 23 search areas:
 - a park and ride facility for up to 750 cars
 - a freight consolidation facility
- Junction 24 search areas:
 - a park and ride facility for up to 350 cars
 - a freight consolidation facility
- Bridgwater search areas:
 - campus accommodation for up to 500 people
- Williton search areas:
 - campus accommodation for up to 200 people
 - a park and ride facility for up to 350 cars
- Combwich Wharf search area:
 - refurbishment of Combwich Wharf
 - a freight consolidation facility
- Alternative emergency access route on public highway



What the press said

The Preferred Option Report has attracted its fair share of criticism, as some of the press headlines made plain. The Bridgwater Mercury started the ball rolling with a report on reactions to Junction 24 proposals: **“Action Group hits out at Huntworth Plans”**, while The Burnham and Highbridge Weekly News came close behind following a Town Council meeting with **“EXCLUSIVE: Homes plan slated by town councillors”**. A month later, another Town Council meeting, and the headline was **“Burnham and Highbridge councillors trash Sedgemoor report”**, clearly pointing towards more work needed on the Burnham and Highbridge sections of the Core Strategy.

Other headlines helped raise the profile of the consultation, with the Mercury, the Cheddar Valley Gazette and Burnham-on-Sea.com all urging residents to get involved: **“Bridgwater’s Future – make yourself heard”**, **“Time to have your say on the future of Cheddar”**, **“Have your say on the future shape of Burnham-on-Sea”**.

Burnham-on-sea.com also picked up on our work with King Alfred School with the headline **“Highbridge school geographers present plans for the future of our towns”**, and gave us one of the best quotes of the whole consultation, from Gemma Lewis in Year 10: “We really enjoyed doing the piece of work about the future of Burnham and Highbridge. It got us involved in how they would like to develop our towns in the next 15 years. We found it amazing how things can change if you plan it carefully”. Hear, hear!

*Talking to
shoppers
in Angel
Place*



Finding out more

Please use our re-invigorated website to keep in touch with what is happening.

www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/ldf

South West Planning Aid provides free, independent advice on planning matters to community groups and individuals who cannot afford professional fees. To find out more go to www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk
Or to find out more about planning generally, go to www.planningportal.gov.uk

Not on our List?

Would you like to receive this newsletter and other information about the LDF regularly? Please let us know if you would like to be on our consultation database – our contact details are opposite.

Prefer email?

It is more efficient and environmentally friendly to send this newsletter out by email if we can. So please let us have your email address if we don't already.

Change of address?

Don't forget to let us know if your address or email address changes so that we can keep our database up-to-date.

Contact us

For any queries not answered on the website, please contact us:

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