

Creating Places for People

Public Consultation – 4th September 2023 to 16th October 2023

We want to hear from you!

Residents and businesses in Somerset are being urged to help shape the future of their county and have their say on how best to create places that put people at the heart of their design.

Somerset Council is launching a public consultation to seek opinions on a set of outline “principles” that are designed to steer new development in Somerset. These should guide developers towards creating attractive and high-quality environments, but also inclusive and accessible places for all, regardless of age, gender, mobility, or background, where people enjoy living.

This document is designed to provide further detail and information for those who wish to know more, in support of the consultation and survey.



What's the problem?

Good street design is integral to creating high quality places. However, too often new developments in Somerset are failing to achieve this.

Developers have traditionally been required to design their schemes based on a system which predicts future transport movements based on past trends. This has led to an over-emphasis on ensuring the local road network and site accesses are built or upgraded to have sufficient capacity to accommodate the predicted increase in car use. Developers have been asked to consider other sustainable travel modes within their designs, and in some cases contributed towards off-site improvements. However, this has always been alongside, and often second to ensuring car-based capacity is delivered. Application of highways guidance has further contributed to this in the design of internal estate roads, which have often prioritised vehicular movements over pedestrians and the creation of great places with enhanced environments.

This approach has often created rather sterile and ‘anywheresville’ feeling developments which lack identity. It has failed to help create the environments needed to enable inclusive movement for all and failed to deliver the necessary shifts to more sustainable modes. The linkage between people’s immediate environment, air quality, and ability to live active lifestyles, and a range of physical and mental health and wellbeing concerns are becoming increasingly more obvious. Carbon emissions from transport remain stubbornly high in Somerset and the UK more widely. People often feel they have no choice but to drive to reach everyday services and facilities.

So what?

High quality places can deliver a wide range of benefits to residents and visitors alike. By making places more people-focused and higher quality, we can enable people to live more sustainably, feel safer and more confident, live healthy and vital lives, save money, reduce carbon footprints, access opportunities, and simultaneously create places people feel proud of, which are attractive and resilient for the future. This can deliver major benefits for Somerset, socially, economically and environmentally.



Now what?

At Somerset Council we are developing a set of placemaking and movement design principles, which we will expect developers to respond to. These principles will look to ensure the above benefits can be realised through new development. They will inform the development of our new Local Transport Plan, new Local Plan, and our overall approach to transport planning, development management (consideration of planning proposals) and other relevant policies and plans. These principles respond to the following vision:

Our Vision Statement: *“Streets and spaces will be designed to be attractive, pleasant and inclusive places that accommodate all users and feel safe for use by all walking and wheeling users. They should prioritise active travel and public transport, maximising connectivity, and permeability not only within development sites, but also providing wider connectivity. Crossings and junctions should always prioritise pedestrians in residential areas. Streets and spaces should also be designed to reflect a hierarchy where movement is related to land use and character.”*

Our **draft** placemaking and movement design principles are as follows:



1. **Reduce need to travel via private car** (internal trips) by ensuring **key facilities and services**, existing and proposed, are within a 20-minute walking or wheeling time. Streets should link to existing roads and local services, ensure **permeability, connectivity** and not turn their backs on neighbours.



2. In towns and more urban areas **reduce parking provision in combination with hard and soft travel plan measures** and include the provision of car/bike clubs, EV bikes/scooters, EV charging and public transport provision. Incorporate a mobility hub approach with mobility and non-mobility components as suitable for the site. The vision in these areas is for **low car ownership and ambitious modal shift** enabled by an increase in **multimodal travel measures**.



3. **Design parking to be unobtrusive** in the public realm, avoiding dominance in the streetscene. Allow for the future **phasing out of parking** to reduce carbon emissions as ownership levels reduce. Prioritise car ports over garages. Secure **cycle parking / infrastructure** is to be provided with well-designed storage facilities either on street or within the property street frontage. Public cycle repair facilities should be incorporated into the scheme.



4. Design an **attractive and high-quality environment** where streets incorporate **trees in the highway** and green spaces, **avoiding large expanses of asphalt**. Wherever possible streets should make positive use of existing natural features. Highway trees should be provided in tree pits rather than planters. The design should **build in opportunities** for biodiversity net gain, green infrastructure, surface water management (permeable surfaces, swales, SUDS) and opportunities to contribute to phosphate mitigation.



5. Design using **natural traffic calming** to achieve **speeds less than 20mph**. Buildings and footways should be located to define junctions. Junction and vehicle movement geometry, sightlines and tracking should be tightened to **reduce vehicle speeds** with **priority given to pedestrians and cyclists**.



6. Careful consideration should be given to how children and parents are to **access schools without reliance upon private cars**, instead encouraging walking, cycling and public bus use. The design approach to school parking will reflect the desire to **maximise active travel movements to school**.



7. **Material palettes are to be simple**, take the **local context** into account (not just black top). Material attractiveness, reducing carbon

emissions as well as durability and ease of maintenance are to be considered.



8. Design should seek to **minimise street clutter** and keep footways and cycleways clear of infrastructure. Lighting, signage and public EV charging should, where possible, be fixed onto a structure.



9. **Consider services and lighting at an early design stage** to avoid impact on placemaking features like street trees and the quality of the movement network. Consider whether lighting is required (dark skies). **Undefined strips of land should be eliminated** at the design stage by fully allocating land to private ownership, highway adoption or stewardship with clear definition of public and private land.



10. Consideration should be given to **incorporating waste storage facilities** to ensure sufficient storage capacity, convenient access and design solutions that complement the wider development.



11. Within **rural** areas, the importance of **safe connectivity within and between communities** and facilities/services will be recognised whilst taking into account factors including landscape, character, appearance and ecology.



12. **Ensure early engagement** with and input from people with responsibility for approvals throughout the whole planning and delivery process.

Get involved!

We want to know what you want to see from new development – What makes a high quality place? Which benefits matter most to you? How can we best ensure that new development enables people to reap these benefits?

If you are reading this document on the consultation platform, please click through to take part in our short survey, it should only take few minutes. Otherwise, please follow the ways to respond below. **Consultation runs from Monday 4th September to Monday 16th October 2023.**

If you are reading this document as a hard copy in one of our offices or libraries, you may be able to use an available computer/screen to respond online.



Image courtesy of Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership



You can respond to the consultation in the following ways:

Online (recommended)

- ❖ Use the QR code (shown on the right) to access the consultation portal, including the survey, on your phone.
- ❖ Follow the link below to access the consultation portal on a computer and tell us what you think:
<https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/planning/creating-places-for-people>



Email

- ❖ Email your response to: localplanningpolicy@somerset.gov.uk.

Post

- ❖ Post or deliver your response to: Planning Policy Team, County Hall, Taunton, TA1 4DY (Monday – Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday 09:00am to 4.00pm)

Thank you for taking the time to respond.

Survey Questions

1. Which of the following benefits, created by the 'Creating Places for People' principles, are the most important to you? Please only select your top 5.

- ☐ Carbon footprints can be reduced;
- ☐ The air is cleaner, and streets are not as noisy;
- ☐ Kids can safely and easily walk, scoot or cycle to school and play on the street;
- ☐ I can live an active and healthy lifestyle and feel confident doing so;
- ☐ I have access to a range of shops, facilities and services in my local community that meet my everyday needs;
- ☐ I have the choice to use the car less, saving money on fuel, parking etc.;
- ☐ Secure bike parking is available at home and at my destinations;
- ☐ Quality of life is improved for all through reduced stress e.g. I don't have to sit in traffic anymore and paths are accessible for everyone;
- ☐ Streets around me are attractive, feel welcoming and have a sense of community, I feel improvements in my mental health and wellbeing;
- ☐ I feel optimistic by seeing resilient spaces for climate change and biodiversity;
- ☐ Streets feel safer for people and cars naturally go slow i.e. reduced speeds are not forced upon me, but streets are designed to meet all users' needs;
- ☐ Hazardous and obstructive parking is reduced, particularly during school times;
- ☐ Footway design reduces my risk of slips, trips and falls e.g. by reducing clutter;
- ☐ I can make rural journeys sustainably to access my everyday needs and they are safe for all users to travel on actively;
- ☐ I can work with and support my local community to help make a difference;
- ☐ Other (please state).

2. Which of the principles listed below do you think should be a priority for new developments to deliver? Please only select your top 5.

- ☐ Reducing the need to travel by car
- ☐ New developments are well connected via links to existing roads and local services
- ☐ Having a choice of transport mode i.e. the car is not the only option
- ☐ Increasing alternative sustainable transport options
- ☐ Reducing parking provision
- ☐ Providing secure cycle parking
- ☐ Creating an attractive high-quality environment e.g. trees and green spaces
- ☐ Ensuring spaces are resilient to climate change and promote biodiversity
- ☐ Reducing vehicle speeds through building and footway design
- ☐ Priority for pedestrians and cyclists
- ☐ Safe and easy access to schools without the car
- ☐ Building and street materials consider the local context
- ☐ Street clutter is minimised
- ☐ Services and lighting are considered early-on in the planning process
- ☐ Waste storage facilities are well-incorporated
- ☐ Safe and sustainable connections between rural communities
- ☐ Engagement with people occurs throughout the planning and delivery process

3. How do you feel about our 'Creating Places for People' principles?

- ☐ Very Supportive
- ☐ Somewhat Supportive
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat Unsupportive
- ☐ Very Unsupportive

4. Do you think that there are any other 'Creating Places for People' principles that should be included?

Please fill out the box below with any other suggestions on principles that should be included within Creating Places for People that you think are missing from Q2.