

**COUNCIL UPDATE NOTE ON THE WECA SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND PREPARATION OF A NEW LOCAL PLAN FOR BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

1. On 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022 the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) Mayor wrote to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to advise him that he had halted work on the WECA Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). The Council submitted a supplementary note to the Examination (reference EXAM7A) outlining the implications for the soundness of the Local Plan Partial Update (LPPU) of the halting of work on the SDS. The note concluded that ‘the halting of work on the SDS does not undermine the preparation of the LPPU, but to the contrary emphasises its importance. There is a need for both the LPPU and a new Local Plan, and work on the latter is scheduled to formally commence this year. The Council does not consider that this change in circumstances raises any issue of soundness.’
2. As set out in EXAM7A the purpose, remit and scope of the LPPU is such that it needs to be progressed to adoption in order that B&NES has in place an updated policy framework whilst a full new Local Plan is prepared. The note also confirmed that the Council is committed to progressing preparation of a full replacement Local Plan as swiftly as possible. This note provides a brief update on the current situation.
3. B&NES Council is not aware that any response to the WECA Mayor’s letter to the Secretary of State has been received. B&NES Council and the other WECA Unitary Authorities (UAs) (Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council) are committed to progressing their Local Plans. In the absence of a response from the Secretary of State and the lack of any indication from the WECA Mayor that work will be re-started on the SDS, the three WECA UAs are of the view that the Local Plans for B&NES, Bristol and South Gloucestershire will now provide the strategic planning framework for the West of England Combined Authority area. The issue of housing need will now be addressed through individual Local Plans for each of the local councils. The three UAs will continue their longstanding history of joint working and co-operate with each other and with other key bodies on strategic, cross-boundary matters as each Council prepares its Local Plan. [The evidence base](#) prepared so far to inform the SDS will be published on the WECA website, and will be reviewed and used as appropriate to inform all councils’ Local Plans.
4. In this context work on the full new Local Plan for B&NES was due to be formally launched on 8<sup>th</sup> September when B&NES Cabinet was scheduled to approve the publication of the B&NES Local Plan Launch Document. However, this meeting has been temporarily delayed in light of the period of mourning for the Queen. The Launch Document, Engagement Strategy, updated Local Development Scheme outlining the proposed preparation programme for the Local Plan can be viewed [here](#) (see agenda Item 13 in the Cabinet meeting papers). It is now anticipated the Local Plan will be adopted by summer 2025.