

Keynsham Stakeholder 2nd Workshop Report

Bath and North East Somerset Council

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Quality information

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) Council was successful in achieving a funding bid from West of England Combined Authority (WECA) to commission Strategic Planning work to assist in the formulation of its new Local Plan. AECOM has been commissioned to undertake the strategic planning commission for the Keynsham Area.
- 1.2 There are two phases of the studies, the Strategic Place Assessments which are high level and cover a broad area of search looking at character and capacity issues such as ecology, landscape, transport, historic environment, and the development potential of particular locations. The second phase will produce updated or new Strategic Planning Frameworks for identified development areas. These are more detailed and place specific and provide the basis for allocating sites within the Local Plan.
- 1.3 The workshops form part of an engagement activity to capture the opinions of local representatives to guide new development ideas and locations and gain insight into to what will best improve people's lives in the surrounding areas.
- 1.4 The second set of B&NES stakeholder workshops were held in July 2023 to inform the Strategic Planning Frameworks for the key study areas.
- 1.5 This Stakeholder Workshop Report will outline the key findings and ideas from the second workshop, broken down into themes that align with the Council's new Corporate Strategy, to ensure all views have been accurately recorded.

2. Methodology

- 2.1 A stakeholder workshop was held on the 18 July 2023 to cover the areas of Keynsham and Saltford with various stakeholders including representatives from Saltford Parish Council, Keynsham Town Council and Compton Dando Parish Council.
- 2.2 The purpose of this workshop was to:
- Gain feedback on the emerging placemaking principles; and
 - Identify opportunities for the future.
- 2.3 The session started with a welcome and introduction from B&NES, followed by details on the Local Plan process and an outline of the development of the district-wide spatial strategy.
- 2.4 The new B&NES Corporate Strategy 2023-2027 was summarised. This consists of:
- One overriding purpose: to improve people's lives
 - Two core policies: Tackling the climate and ecological emergency and giving people a bigger say
 - Three principles: Prepare for the future; deliver for local residents; and focus on prevention.
 - Four values: bold, empowered, transparent and supportive.
- 2.5 The Corporate Strategy comprises nine priorities to deliver the three aforementioned principles:
- Delivering for local residents:
 - The right homes in the right places - improving availability of affordable housing, accessible to local jobs and services.
 - More travel choices – making it easier for people to walk, wheel and use public transport to reduce transport emissions.
 - Clean, safe and vibrant neighbourhoods - working with local communities to promote civic pride and preventative approaches.
 - Focusing on prevention:
 - Support for vulnerable adults and children – securing safe, effective services that meet the needs of our changing population.
 - Delivering for our children and young people – working with our partners to narrow the early years attainment gap.
 - Healthy lives and places – working with health and other partners to tackle inequalities, promote healthy places, and support people to live healthier lives.
 - Preparing for the future:
 - Good jobs - aiming to increase the median wage in a regenerative economy.

- Skills to thrive - an inclusive economy where prosperity is shared.
- Cultural life - valuing and developing its contribution to Bath and North East Somerset.

2.6 The Placemaking principles synthesised specifically for Keynsham and Saltford are as follows:

- Become climate resilient, carbon neutral and nature positive by 2030;
- Create a Nature Recovery network;
- Create wetland habitats;
- Generate countryside ecological corridors;
- Enhance the access to the countryside;
- Interact with nature and promote health and well-being;
- Maintain the existing character;
- Protect and enhance the heritage assets;
- Provide easy access to the River Avon;
- Maximise the delivery of affordable housing;
- Provide a variety of jobs, services and community facilities;
- Promote active modes of transport;
- Build a network of fully integrated transport exchange hubs;
- Enable an inclusive transport system; and
- Seek opportunities for large scale renewable energy generation.

2.7 The workshop participants engaged in two sets of open discussion sessions to provide feedback on the above placemaking principles and to identify future opportunities related to the climate and ecological emergency, health and wellbeing, local economy, sustainable transport and housing need.

3. Outcomes

- 3.1 The workshop structure consisted of open discussion on feedback for the Principles of the Corporate Strategy (listed in paragraph 2.5) and identification of possible development locations, drawing upon known Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) sites.

Principles of the Corporate Strategy

Delivering for local residents

The right homes in the right places

- 3.2 Concerns were raised about the allocation of housing. Homes termed ‘affordable’ are not always actually so. Many voices expressed a desire for social or rentable housing to be provided, and for it to be integrated into developments rather than segregated. Even when policy stipulates a proportion of affordable or social housing, this isn’t always delivered if it means the development struggles to get through the planning process. One such example was a housing development in south-western Keynsham which has not been well connected into the existing community. It was felt by stakeholders that the benefits of development for the existing community have not fully materialised.
- 3.3 There is a desire from people in the Corston area to be able to downsize as they grow older. They don’t want to move away from the existing community and there is insufficient suitable accommodation available in the area. An appropriately sized development in this area providing smaller houses could help free up larger homes for others, including families. Participants noted a need for a positive mix of housing types and sizes to be shared across Keynsham, Saltford and Corston, as a whole.

More travel choices

- 3.4 Stakeholders wanted to explore the connectivity between Keynsham, Saltford, Bristol and Bath but also consider the links to London.
- 3.5 There is a desire to improve current public transport modes:
- During peak hours, the bus services are heavily used by schools and additional capacity, or dedicated services would be beneficial.
 - There is a strong desire to re-open Saltford Station to improve connectivity to Bristol, Keynsham and Bath, as well as potentially introducing a station (with a car park) somewhere between Saltford and Keynsham or Saltford and Bath which could act as a Park & Ride.
 - There are some concerns that change to the corridor will cause a bottleneck of traffic on local roads.
 - Rail schemes could look to improve accessibility to the existing rail network and, therefore, encourage people out of cars.
 - An additional footbridge across the railway at Saltford could also reduce severance and encourage walking.

- Keynsham station is not well connected to the high street, improvements here would encourage rail usage.

3.6 There is also a desire to introduce and encourage new travel modes:

- There was discussion of reintroducing a river taxi to connect Keynsham to Bath as well as providing a leisure activity which may increase people's well-being. This idea also included the transition of Newbridge Park & Ride into a mobility hub with the proposed river taxi.
- Orbital connectivity issues - there are no active travel links between Whitchurch and Keynsham, and what little connectivity there is, is car based. River valleys, topography and the presence of floodplains do not lead to an easy solution, but it is something that needs to be explored.
- There was a general interest in active travel and proposed improvements to the cycle network. A comment that lots of small interventions over a large area can provide an overall large benefit.
- There is interest in a cycle path along the river Avon connecting Keynsham and Saltford to Bath. A key discussion point was also improved access to the existing cycle network. The group covered concerns of sustainable transport and discussed the seasonality of active travel. A solution to this would be to couple active travel with sustainable mass transport systems such as buses and rail, through improved active travel connectivity to these modes.
- Reassurance that the mobility hub to be introduced would be easily accessible by all age groups (including the 65 plus age group). The group recognised the placemaking benefits of the hub and the opportunity for users to gain access to Bristol and Bath. An important theme was connectivity and the ability for residents in the periphery areas of Keynsham, southwest Keynsham, to access the hub. Stakeholders highlighted that residents with limited mobility struggled on some developments and highlighted the need for wider pavements and ramps to cater for those with mobility aids.
- An on demand/responsive service that was cheaper than taxis was briefly discussed. It was suggested that something more comparable to West Link – some sort of on demand bus service – would be a good solution.

Clean, safe, and vibrant neighbourhoods

- 3.7 It was highlighted that any new developments need to be considered in a way that mitigates flooding for residents. Previous developments such as the Chocolate Factory retirement village faced flooding due to failed mitigation measures and boat house residents have been left isolated due to flooding. Developments at risk of flooding are unattractive to investors and residents.
- 3.8 Manor Road / Back Lane is used by locals when the A4 is congested, and people are wary of cycling along it as it is a national speed limit route. It has previously been requested to introduce a speed reduction. It is a scenic route, but significant bends cause a lack of visibility and blind spots.
- 3.9 Many members voiced that any biodiversity net gain should be included within the boundary of development sites rather than being offset to another location to

accommodate more housing within the boundary. A general feeling that there should be an overall focus on what is good for the environment rather than just focussing on incremental patches of housing to meet the need for new homes.

3.10 There is a desire to utilise the river to create walking and cycling green routes whilst noting that topography and floodplains may not make this feasible.

Focussing on prevention

Support for vulnerable adults and children

3.11 Many voices expressed the desire for sufficient social/rentable housing to be provided.

3.12 Multiple concerns were raised regarding poor quality of pavements. Improving pavement quality may improve access and safety to bus stops for walkers, wheelers and those using mobility aids. Desire expressed for the overall A4 corridor project to improve the pavement where required. the Council was asked to ensure that prioritising access to the bus stop is added into developments and the new Local Plan. Good quality access is required to encourage use of public transport.

Delivering for our children and young people

3.13 There are likely a number of parents currently driving as either:

- They don't want their children using the existing active travel facilities as they are unsafe, particularly around Queen Charlton and Charlton Estate/Road.
- Public transport provisions do not cover the required routes between housing developments and schools.

3.14 It was suggested that alternative bus routes and alternative 'quiet ways' should be considered to cater for children and young people accessing education. Consideration should also be given to providing additional nurseries and childcare facilities as part of new housing developments such that parents are encouraged to use active travel to transport their children a shorter distance.

Healthy lives and places

3.15 There is a demand to provide recreational green spaces for Saltford. There is increasing pressure on the green space east of Saltford along the River Avon. Any new development sites are expected to aspire to benefit new residents but also focus on the needs of current residents and look to attract existing residents into the development spaces. The idea of a theatre was discussed for the development site north of Keynsham which would discourage the need to travel to Bristol and Bath for this social activity.

3.16 Concerns were raised regarding recent developments suffering from poor accessibility, either due to a lack of public transport and active travel connections, or through only having one road in and out of the area. This was particularly the case for the new developments at southwest Keynsham. Residents expressed the view that whilst there has been significant development, the supporting infrastructure has not kept pace.

- 3.17 It was acknowledged that North Keynsham is a potential development site that needs to be better explored to deliver a relief road to take pressure off the High Street. Road space could then be reallocated, and some potential regeneration encouraged. North Keynsham could have a mix of land uses and there are many options that could be explored.

Preparing for the future

Good jobs

- 3.18 Stakeholders wanted to attract industry to improve the economy of the area and encourage regeneration. High-tech industries in the form of a business hub or science park were mentioned, potentially in Hicks Gate which would be well connected to the new mobility hub. Importance was also placed on enabling new smaller business to use hotdesking and hybrid working facilities (e.g. Bristol Paintworks) whilst avoiding spaces adjacent to the river becoming home to warehouses. It was also suggested that there was a need for a quality artistic space that could be used by a range of people/communities as well as business.

Skills to thrive

- 3.19 Stakeholders recognised the need to consider the local economy and how this will be shaped in the future. A discussion involved the protection of the food production industry and the need to produce food locally as well as supporting British farmers. There was an acknowledgement of the need to balance agricultural land and natural habitat whilst also meeting the need for housing in the local plan.
- 3.20 The discussion continued to ensure land use which has been allocated for certain purpose is provided and protected. This example included the use and provision of allotment spaces. Residents are faced with a long waiting list for allotments and there is a demand for green spaces in Keynsham.

Cultural life

- 3.21 Concerns were raised around the introduction of significant numbers of houses. The question was asked about what other types of space are needed to support the new residents and how much business might they generate in the area.
- 3.22 Concerns were also raised around piecemeal developments not being of a scale to generate or justify the support services or community facilities required. This leads to unsustainable areas where people don't want to live as there is insufficient access. For example it was queried where the children would go to school if 100 new homes were built near a school that is full. There were a number of comments raising concerns about full schools. Stakeholders acknowledged that careful consideration is required at the strategic planning stage to ensure sufficient facilities are provided along with the additional houses.
- 3.23 There is a distinct gap between Saltford and Keynsham in the form of private farmland with footpaths across. A query was raised as to whether it could ever be supported locally (i.e., gifted as a country park) such that it could never be built on to maintain a green corridor.
- 3.24 Concerns were raised that lots of housing had been introduced recently in Keynsham, without the proper transport infrastructure to support these new areas. This has also led to a feeling that Keynsham has lost its village atmosphere and has gotten too big.

Other

- 3.25 Whilst the group want to promote active and sustainable travel, they were concerned by policies to deter car use. While the group understood the value of policies which influence user behaviour and discourage car use, the group are concerned that policies do not evenly impact users from different economic groups. Parking charges linked to vehicle CO₂ emissions were given as an example, and how the pressure to change behaviour fell more heavily on users from lower income groups and suggestions were made that there could be greater flexibility.
- 3.26 There was a general excitement that the mobility hub and potential connections to it provide exciting opportunities, and it feels that the general connectivity through the area and into the surrounding region is starting to come together.
- 3.27 There was a concern regarding cars being rerouted and diverted causing unanticipated pinch points and where this might occur.
- 3.28 Parking standards and design standards for parking have not been implemented successfully for previous developments and it would be positive if this could be improved in future.
- 3.29 It was voiced that there should be strict stipulations, such as solar panels on every roof and that every house should be deemed affordable, for developments to be passed through planning.

Identification of possible HELAA Locations

- 3.30 Stakeholders typically wanted to ensure that new developments were close to the centre of settlement to encourage active travel methods whilst not overpopulating Keynsham and Saltford centres and losing their 'village' aesthetic.
- 3.31 One item discussed was the creation of a new town, returning to previous development models such as garden cities which could provide sufficient affordable housing. The group was concerned with the continued method of expanding on the periphery of towns leading to unaffordable and disconnected developments.
- 3.32 One suggestion was to spread development evenly between the three settlements. By sharing the dwellings between Keynsham, Saltford, Corston and Whitchurch there is a reduced threat of them losing their respective character.
- 3.33 There is an overall desire for development sites to contain the appropriate infrastructure, as well as green infrastructure, not just rows of housing.

Development between Keynsham and Saltford

- 3.34 A recurring point in the discussion was the need to keep the separation between the two settlements of Keynsham and Saltford. Representatives felt strongly that Keynsham and Saltford had their own distinctions and identities and the green corridor separating the towns as crucial to keeping their respective characters. Any development must keep the existing green corridor and nature reserve.

Keynsham

3.35 There is a concern that further expansion of Keynsham would cause it to lose its character and that typically residents want to keep the village feel of the area. There was a desire that future housing be owner/resident occupied rather than allowing short term lets.

North Keynsham (Zone 1)

- Many voiced this as the only potential location for development in/around Keynsham and that development here was inevitable at some point. There was interest in development at the location where the warehouses are located.
- There was enthusiasm towards innovative housing developments and the potential to reclaim the flood plains for nature, recreation and housing . The discussion included floating housing, house boats and canal boats along the river Avon. This is Flood Zone 3b.
- Notes of concern that developments in the north may be at risk of severance from the A4 corridor development and the railway line therefore connectivity is key.
- Interest in any new roads to housing development being utilised to draw traffic away from the high street (for placemaking purposes) and to provide multiple vehicle access points to the developments to mitigate bottlenecks and avoiding an existing set of already congested traffic lights. Any development would have to be provided with adequate supporting infrastructure.
- There is a hope to pedestrianise Keynsham High Street in the next four years. Resolving existing issues with cycle lanes is an important part of this. This regeneration will hopefully lead to more active frontage, fewer empty shops and the potential for pop ups and markets.
- There were also some spaces in the north of Keynsham that may provide potential business and therefore employment opportunities, for example the Pixash area.

South West Keynsham (Zone 2)

- A potential location was identified near Charlton Road. Existing congestion here causes concern would need to cater for biodiversity and protect wildlife located in surrounding green spaces. This location already has congestion problems and there were concerns that new development would contribute to this already existing problem. The group were not enthusiastic to expand here without further improvements to infrastructure. There is a feeling of community isolation as there are no community facilities. Concern that any potential expansion here is limited by gas pipelines, topography and access.

South Keynsham (Zone 3)

- South Keynsham has a lorry rat run near Chewton Keynsham and the land is contaminated (potentially with Anthrax) which poses a threat to new

residents and buildings. This land would require health and safety inspections.

East Keynsham

- Courtney Road area has an hourly bus service that could be improved.
- There are routes for walking but they are busy near the school (Herne Lane) and the Manor Road connection making them unsafe.
- There are some B&NES fields that are leased by the Town Council as playing fields. The latest census shows more children in the area than before and there is a desire to provide more/better sports fields and parks for them.
- South east Keynsham is a bit better connected but transport links could be improved. There are concerns about coalescing with Saltford and desire to maintain a biodiversity corridor between the two towns/villages. To meet the needs of the environment first and the needs of the people second.

Saltford

South Saltford (Zone 4)

- It was suggested that there could be potential for a new settlement along the A39. (N.B. this was suggested by non-Saltford representatives). There was a general disinterest in expanding areas represented by the attendees, and therefore they looked further afield. Participants pointed out that previous planning applications were denied for housing Southeast of Saltford (not the green area to the south).
- Concern raised that ribbon development along the A4 could lead to coalescence of Keynsham and Saltford. A desire expressed to keep them separate to maintain their distinct identities. Saltford have a Waitrose, a doctor's surgery, catering, and sports. Only much bigger infrastructure was missing that residents travel further afield for.
- A mobility hub suggested to greatly improve the connectivity between Saltford and Keynsham as there is not currently a suitable bus connection. This would enable better access to the High Streets as well as tourists from other areas. Lots of people commute from Saltford to work.
- Saltford High Street – participants are typically happy with the level of facilities provided, with no real desire for major improvements other than the pavements for better access. It was noted that there is not a huge amount of 'rat running'.

Other (Zone 4)

- The group discussed a new settlement along the A39. The discussion was due to the lack of interest in expanding existing areas and therefore participants looked to see if there were possible alternative locations.

Other (Zone 5)

- The group discussed converting part of Newbridge Park and Ride into a space for dwellings and development. Many felt Newbridge Park and Ride is never at capacity and this space could be used for a new development - an idea was to turn one of the three parking areas into a development site.

Hicks Gate

- Hicks Gate was identified as a good site for housing provided it does not start to blend Keynsham with Bristol.

Corston

- A Community Housing Scheme Proposal was made for Corston and Compton Down, where supported by a housing need survey, working with the planning department, so that locally supported housing can come forward in each of these communities if there is a local need. There is some local nervousness that this could lead to a large estate that is segregated rather than integrated into the community.

Whitchurch

- Whitchurch was also considered. It was suggested that there's space for a few thousand houses here, which could justify further facilities like schools and medical facilities. It should be noted that this opinion was not raised by representatives of Whitchurch.
- There is opposition here to a large-scale development due to heritage concerns for smaller villages around.
- Whitchurch village is a Liveable Neighbourhood and there is a concern from stakeholders that a new development would encourage traffic to/from/through and not support this policy.

