

**This response questionnaire includes the following:**

- A. The Critical Issues to be addressed by the Core Strategy
- B. The Spatial Vision for the Core Strategy showing how the area and the places in it should develop
- C. Strategic objectives for the area based on the key issues identified
- D. Summaries of options put forward for comments

NB – the options put forward for comment at this stage are not the policies themselves, but an indication of the content of potential policies which would be drafted and be subject to consultation at a later date.

- It is emphasised that at this stage in the Core Strategy preparation process no option has been ruled in or out apart from those arising directly from the requirements of national or regional planning policy;
- The purpose of this consultation is to find out which options for strategies or policies are supported by the community and the various stakeholders;
- Whether there are any further options not included which would address the critical issues identified and help to realise the Core Strategy Vision.

**Please note that it is important that representations are supported by reasons and /or evidence as to why a particular option is or is not favoured.**

**A. The Critical Issues**

These are the challenges which really stand out, the successful management of which provides the key to addressing many of the other key issues and enabling positive place shaping to take place within the Core Strategy area. This is the purpose for preparing a Core Strategy. The Critical Issues are:

- 1. The extreme degree of disparity between average house prices and average earnings, with consequent high level of unmet affordable housing need**
- 2. The requirement to provide 2,500 dwellings during the period 2006 to 2026.**
- 3. The demographic imbalance in the area, with its low proportion of 19 – 45 year olds, and high proportion of 50+ age group**
- 4. The narrow base of the economy, and the predominance of low income jobs in agriculture, tourism and social care**
- 5. The relatively poor level of accessibility between the West Somerset communities and the M5 corridor**
- 6. The need to reduce the relatively high per capita level of Co<sub>2</sub> production within West Somerset**
- 7. Management of flood risk in and around the main settlements**
- 8. The importance of protecting the West Somerset landscape.**

These critical issues are also the driving force for the themes and objectives of the County and District Sustainable Community Strategies and the Council's Corporate Plan objectives.

**B. The Draft Spatial Vision for the Core Strategy showing how the area and the places in it should develop:**

- **ECONOMY** - By 2026 Minehead, Watchet and Williton will be the centres of a thriving and increasingly varied local economy within West Somerset, which will enable more people to work close to their homes. People will have the skills to enable them to work and thrive in this more diverse economy. The tourism industry will also have diversified with a wider range of sustainable enterprises.
- **HOUSING** – By 2026 there will have been a significant increase in the amount of affordable housing provided in the area. More people will be able to afford housing which is appropriate to their circumstances. New housing development will be located in locations which will help to secure a reduction in transport demand and more self contained settlements. 2,500 additional houses will have been provided in accordance with the provisions of the South West RSS.
- **ENVIRONMENT** – By 2026 there will be a marked increase in the low carbon economy locally. Biodiversity will have been strengthened and flood risk will have been managed positively in accommodating new development. More of the District's food supply will be produced locally.

**C. the Draft Strategic Objectives for the area based on the key issues identified:**

- Strengthen the role and function of the District's main settlements
- Implement types and quantities of development in locations appropriate to meet the RSS requirements
- Increase self containment within the District's main settlements
- successfully managing flood risk in implementing new development
- Make a step change in the provision of affordable housing to meet identified local needs
- Make a significant reduction in Co<sub>2</sub> emissions for the District
- Create an aspirational, enterprising and entrepreneurial culture within West Somerset
- develop the quality of the tourism offer within the District
- protect and enhance biodiversity in the District
- Conserve and enhance the character of historic settlements, buildings and landscapes
- Deliver high quality design in new development which will contribute to the area's heritage in a positive way