

West of England

Bath & North East
Somerset Council



North
Somerset
Council

South Gloucestershire
Council

West of England Joint Strategic Planning Strategy

Pre-commencement Document December 2014

**An initiation document setting out the
proposed scope and programme for the
preparation of the joint strategic planning
strategy (development plan)**

**Bath and North East Somerset Council
Bristol City Council
North Somerset Council
South Gloucestershire Council**

Introduction

1. The four authorities which comprise the West of England area are actively engaged in joint working on strategic planning issues.
2. In March 2014 the West of England authorities formally agreed to work together on a Joint Strategic Planning Strategy (Appendix A). This Memorandum of Understanding committed the four unitary authorities, working with partner organisations and adjacent authorities as appropriate, to jointly prepare a new strategic framework. This will be a strategic planning framework for the West of England and will inform local plan reviews. Its objective will be to identify the overall quantum of housing and jobs within the West of England to be planned for and their distribution across the sub-region, the overall spatial strategy, strategic priorities, and strategic infrastructure necessary to deliver the spatial strategy.
3. The Joint Strategic Planning Strategy will be a formal development plan document prepared in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). Preparation of the JSPS is a substantial task and will have significant implications for the future planning of the sub-region. This pre-commencement document sets out how the four planning authorities will work together to deliver the required outcomes.

Purpose of a Pre-commencement document

4. This Pre-commencement document is the notice of intent that a Joint Strategic Planning Strategy is to be prepared for the West of England and sets out its scope, methodology and programme and is prepared in accordance with Regulation 18(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. It sets out how the principles set out in the March 2014 Memorandum of Understanding will be delivered through the preparation of a statutory development plan document.
5. The West of England Unitary Authorities are committed to joint working, sharing resources and expertise to prepare a formal development plan document to an agreed timetable. This will provide the means by which the outputs of the new Strategic Housing Market Assessment will be considered and articulated within a formal strategic planning document. The distribution of development will then be allocated and delivered through the policy framework agreed by the JSPS, involving, where appropriate, cross boundary agreement. The proposed programme for plan preparation is set out at paragraph 16.

Duty to Co-operate

6. The West of England authorities are committed to an early review of their Core Strategies. This review process will require a robust

strategic policy framework prepared in a way which complies with the Duty to Co-operate. The co-ordinated preparation of a spatial strategy in response to the planning vision will more successfully facilitate sustainable development well aligned with essential infrastructure. Working together on strategic plan-making as opposed to relying only separate plan reviews will be more effective, avoiding duplication on evidence gathering and reducing the risk, uncertainty and costs for the West of England authorities and other stakeholders associated with a successful legal challenge.

7. The JSPS will provide the overall strategic vision and framework with each unitary authority responsible for delivery through their respective individual local plan reviews. Effective working together on individual local plan reviews to ensure that they are delivered in a consistent and co-ordinated fashion will be critical to the achievement of sustainable City Region growth and development and to give statutory plan-led expression to the objectives of the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

8. The West of England authorities are currently undertaking a new SHMA to cover the period 2016-2036. This will review the evidence in relation to the configuration of housing market area(s) in the sub-region in order to establish the objectively assessed need for housing. If the evidence continues to show that there are separate housing market areas centred on Bristol and Bath, then the new SHMA will provide outputs for the wider Bristol HMA only (comprising Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire). The JPS will still include all four West of England Authorities, with spatial options in all four UAs being equal contenders at the outset. The JSPS will use the evidence on objectively assessed need as a key input and through the plan-making process identify the housing requirement and its spatial implications across all four West of England Authorities.

Scope of the Joint Strategic Planning Strategy

9. The plan area will be the combined administrative area of the four West of England authorities (see map to be attached).
10. The purpose of the document is to consider through joint working the outputs of the new SHMA alongside other evidence and technical studies, to test spatial options and to adopt a new formal sustainable strategic spatial framework that will guide the review and roll-forward of the unitary authorities' local plans.
11. The plan period for the JSPS will reflect the timescale of the new SHMA 2016-2036.

12. The JSPS will respond to and reflect the current West of England vision as set out in the Strategic Economic Plan (2014). However, the opportunity will be taken to develop and refine the vision in parallel with the JSPS to ensure that it provides a clear context for a wide range of interrelated plans and strategies – social, economic and environmental.
13. The scope of the plan is limited to the following key spatial issues:
 - The overall housing requirement to be accommodated in the West of England based on the outputs of the new SHMA.
 - The broad strategic distribution of housing and employment land/floorspace, including strategic locations and key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy and the resultant requirement for each district.
 - Identification of strategic infrastructure proposals, including transport, required to deliver the scale of development envisaged.

Other issues, detailed policy development and allocations will be the responsibility of the individual unitary authorities.

14. The plan preparation process will collate and assess existing evidence as well as, where appropriate, commissioning new studies. The Joint Strategic Planning Strategy will need to be based on an up-to-date evidence base which, in addition to the SHMA, is likely to include the following assessments:
 - Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment
 - Economic development needs assessment
 - Strategic infrastructure requirements
 - Transport
 - Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
 - Capacity studies including assessment of biodiversity, landscape and historic character
 - Sustainability Appraisal
 - Habitats Regulations Assessment
 - Green Belt and greenfield

The four authorities are working together to agree how these workstreams will be progressed in terms of agreeing the methodology, timetable and most effective methods of working. For example, the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment will be prepared jointly in 2015 to provide a consistent, comprehensive up-to-date evidence base for the plan area. Gaps in the evidence or the need for additional studies will be identified as plan preparation progresses. An appraisal of Green Belt and greenfield may also be required in response to the objectively assessed of the need for housing, employment and infrastructure pressures and the assessment of developable land.

Sustainability appraisal

15. A framework for sustainability appraisal will be agreed at the beginning of the project and used to assess and inform the plan-making process. It is intended to publish a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.

Timescales

16. The proposed timetable is set out below. This is indicative at this stage and may change as plan preparation progresses.

Plan phase	Time period	Stage
Commitment to joint working	March 2014	Memorandum of Understanding agreed.
Plan preparation	December 2014	Pre-commencement document published (Reg 18)
	Autumn 2014-Summer 2015	Assessment of evidence base; gap analysis; undertaking of additional studies; initial identification of spatial options.
	Summer 2015-Autumn 2015	Consideration of, and consultation on, issues and spatial options.
	Autumn 2015 to end 2015	Preparation of draft spatial strategy
	Spring 2016	Consultation on Submission document (Reg 19/20)
Examination	Summer 2016	Submission (Reg 22)
	Autumn 2016	Examination hearings Reg 24/25)
Adoption	Spring 2017	Adoption (Reg 26)

Consultation

17. The plan will be prepared with community and stakeholder engagement in accordance with the Statements of Community Involvement of the four authorities. Formal consultation stages will take place over a minimum of 6 weeks. A Consultation Statement will be prepared and updated as the project progresses.

Governance

18. Plan preparation will be undertaken through joint working between the West of England LEP office and the four unitary authorities using existing resources. Formal decisions will be taken by elected members at the Planning, Homes and Community Board/ Committee, and scrutinised by the West of England Joint Scrutiny Committee. Final adoption will be by resolution of each of the West of England authorities.

19. The main point of contact for the project will be:

Joint Strategic Planning Strategy
West of England Office
Engine Shed
Station Approach
Temple Meads
Bristol BS1 6QH

Telephone: 0117 903 6862

Email: planning@westofengland.org

Let us know what you think

20. Views are being sought on the proposed content, scope, and programme. If you have any comments on the Pre-commencement document please let us know using the above contacts by **6th March 2015**. Any representations received will be taken into account through the plan preparation process.

Appendix A: Joint Strategic Planning Strategy MoU.

West of England



West of England Joint Planning Strategy February 2014

Introduction

1. The four local planning authorities of Bath & NE Somerset, Bristol City, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire which comprise the West of England will continue to work together with the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership, Local Nature Partnership, neighbouring authorities, Government agencies, and other public bodies on strategic cross-boundary matters. Joint working will continue to take place constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to deliver effective strategic planning to support sustainable development.
2. We demonstrate this through the West of England authorities working together to produce:
 - A new West of England Strategic Housing Market Assessment to replace the 2009 SHMA using the most up to date evidence available.
 - A joint planning strategy to guide future growth and development across the West of England

The West of England SHMA

3. The new West of England SHMA will cover the period 2016 -2036. This will provide the strategic context for the review and roll-forward of local plans. The four authorities will prioritise and resource this process to ensure that a robust SHMA is finalised by spring 2015. The replacement SHMA will provide a key evidence base for the review of strategic policies of the West of England Local Plans.
4. To facilitate this, the West of England authorities will prioritise and resource a joint process of assessing the implications of the SHMA outputs. This will provide an opportunity for each Council to work with the other West of England Unitary Authorities in identifying future

needs and pursuing complementary strategies capable of delivering and supporting economic and social growth across the sub-region.

The West of England Joint Planning Strategy

5. The strategic planning implications resulting from the updated evidence base will be addressed through a West of England joint planning strategy prepared by the four authorities, working with adjoining authorities external to the West of England where necessary. Building upon the current West of England Strategic Framework, the West of England Joint Planning Strategy will provide a formal coordinated strategic context to inform local plan reviews.
6. The West of England joint planning strategy will identify: the overall quantum of housing and jobs within the West of England and their distribution across the sub-region; the overall spatial strategy; strategic priorities; and strategic infrastructure necessary to deliver the spatial strategy for the West of England. Joint studies will be procured to support this process such as spatial options.
7. The West of England authorities are committed to work together on the basis of the following broad timetable. This will be refined as work progresses:

2014	Interim SHMA findings
2015	Final SHMA
2015-2016	Respond to evidence and assess spatial options
2016-2017	Finalisation of joint planning strategy
2016-2021	Adoption of new local plans

Dated:14th March 2014

Signed

Bath & NE Somerset



Bristol City



North Somerset



South Gloucestershire



