B&NES Local Plan Engagement

Stakeholder Workshops - Stage A
RURAL 1&2

12 & 23 January 2023

Draft Report v2
27 Feb 2023

Two workshops for community representatives and key stakeholders in rural areas of B&NES were held at Keynsham Library on January 12th and 23rd.

Each workshop was attended by approximately 23 people. It was introduced with a short presentation on the process of developing the Local Plan and the workshop themes developed from the <u>West of England Placemaking Charter</u>.

The first half of the workshop explored what community representatives and stakeholders valued about their places and their aspirations for the future of these places. The second part explored responses to two prompt questions under the six themes. The questions were identified by B&NES officers at a workshop on the 5$^{th\ of}$ January 2023.

Stakeholders discussed their views in groups of 5 to 8 people with the support of B&NES officers. Each theme was considered by all the groups with stakeholders being invited to gradually highlight key points and feed these back to the room.

This initial response from community representatives and key stakeholders will inform the development of policy and spatial options that will be the subject of a second stage of engagement in Summer 2023.

DRAFT SUMMARY

The following highlights some of the emerging values, aims and priorities identified by stakeholders. This should form the basis for feedback at Stage B in the summer. See the whole report for more place specific and detailed observations.

ZERO CARBON AND CLIMATE RESLIENCE

- A strategic approach is needed, wish to see communities become more resilient and energy self-sufficient at a neighbourhood scale.
- Role of sharing good practice and highlighting, learning from and promoting community led retrofit and energy initiatives.
- Make delivery of appropriate wind and solar farms easier. Prepare strategies with communities.

- Enable diversification of land use to support sustainable rural business, serve with digital connectivity.

MOVING AROUND

- Wish to see better transport connectivity to the three cities but also as a network linking villages/towns.
- See hub and spoke connectivity linking walking and cycling to transport nodes - consider whole journeys.
- Better and safer walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure needed fairer sharing of space inside settlements with safer/wider footpaths.
- Local and mobile activities, opportunities and services needed. Space for young people a priority.

NATURAL SPACES & BIODIVERSITY

- Widen access to PROWS for people and wildlife in combination - make a comprehensive plan to improve access and link green spaces and active travel.
- More guidance for agricultural businesses - to see better management of hedgerows and more joined up approaches to place and nature.
- Improve access to community growing spaces and allotments.
- Important to see nature protected and mitigation for loss - value water and river quality as well as greenspaces and dark skies.

IDENTITY & BELONGING

- Support for evidence-based growth that is appropriate, sustainable and adaptive - concerns about scale of change and impact on settlements.
- Strategic role of new development identified - in some places wish to see 'sustainable growth that delivers overall benefit'.
- Important to retain and enhance rural character of landscape and buildings - how building sit in the landscape, their styles and materials - see housing with good quality standards.
- Community resources are valued especially as places to support vibrant community leadership and networks.

HOUSING AND SHARED PROSPERITY

- Need for appropriate, diverse, affordable mix of housing to support a vibrant demographic and make better use of existing stock.
- Lifetime homes to ensure independence can be maintained for as long as needed, more attractive small/compact downsizing opportunities and supported living & housing for older people.
- Housing needed for key workers, young people and families.
- More employment opportunities in villages. Greater flexibility of housing - business diversification. Barns for non-agricultural work space.
- Enable role of community land trusts.

HEALTHY & INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

- Create good quality places to gather and civic outdoor spaces, parks with benches.
- Stronger vibrant community hubs, multi-use flexible spaces and infrastructure - for co-working, events, meet ups - new or intensify existing buildings.
- Develop 15-minute rural neighbourhoods with things to do locally and access to (mobile) arts and cultural services and good amenities - PO, doctors, dentist, pharmacist, chiropodist, village hall - community groups.
- Community volunteers and social leaders are key, they need valuing, looking after and recognising openly.
- Using wider determinants of wellbeing to shape plan. Mental wellbeing supported locally - places and contact/support to reduce social isolation.

In three words what do you value about your place?

Responses organised here by theme and above in a word cloud.

MOVING AROUND	NATURAL SPACES	IDENTITY	HEALTH & INCLUSION
sensitive infrastructure	greenspace x7	beauty x2	Community x13
national cycle routes	landscape x5	history (architecture-	size-mix of community
horse-riding	wildlife x3	character)	community fragility
separate but accessible to	dark sky x2	character	sense of community
urban areas	open space	views	community hall
access to cycle routes	verdant	rural	shops and local amenities
proximity to Bath	tranquil	history	mix of community
access to variety of nature	unspoilt countryside	heritage	spread of economic
area for walking	habitats	conservation	opportunity
easy access to cities	views and open spaces	character of village-	valued diverse cultural offer
proximity of city	nature-birds	conservation	skilled population
proximity to three cities	buffer to Bristol	village farming community	close community
linking of villages	setting	peaceful	
walkable	green/blended villages	views	
access of countryside	nature	it's a village	
connected	beautiful rural setting	individuality	
local facilities	connectivity	history	
Bath opportunities	green landscape	pride	
variety/quality	education/ agriculture	diversity	
range of lifestyles	Countryside	rural x2	
rural/school	wider landscape	countryside retreat	
facilities	contentment	semi-isolation	
closeness	environment	sense of openness	
position	downs canal	sense of belonging	
connectivity	river	strategically diverse	
	water	identities	
	floods and ecosystems	Attractive	
	spirit	Desirable	
	immersion in countryside		

ZERO CARBON & CLIMATE RESILIENCE

> **Development contributes to B&NES's net zero 2030 ambition and to climate resilience. More local, clean energy is generated. The transition to greener low carbon lifestyles is supported for all. Resources are used efficiently, and buildings and materials are low carbon and/or are re-used creatively.** (Aims throughout adapted from the Placemaking Charter with reference to B&NES local plan ambitions and priorities and B&NES draft economic strategy).

When initially considering the future of their places Stakeholders highlighted the following:

Understanding a realistic acceptance that renewable energy is needed. This **could be delivered through a strategy on renewable energy - wind/solar etc.** Wish to see communities become more resilient and energy self-sufficient highlighting the role of community energy schemes. All new construction net zero plus or carbon positive see sensitive use of renewables on every new development large and small. Also, to consider support to transition to renewable heating of existing buildings. Be mindful of impact on landscapes and conservation areas. In scale areas of land could be allocated for community energy, affordable housing or business use.

What changes would you like to see to support you to live low carbon lifestyle - for example would you like your community to access a renewable energy supply?

- **New builds to be net zero for operational and embodied carbon. Or Carbon positive Net PLUS.**
- **Insulation surveys/retrofitting grants. Enabling retrofitting of homes and solar panels on all public buildings. Source of financial contributions?**
- **Neighbourhood renewables strategies.** Help for neighbourhood renewable energy solutions. Ability of communities to enable provision of renewables. Better provision of evidence framework to speed enablement. Annual levy back to communities. E.g., community owned solar farms with battery storage.
- Storing energy generally - hydrogen storage, old mine shafts for gravity battery or and heat storage.
- Visibility of B&NES retrofit and renewables projects available to residents to inspire confidence. Improve quality of information available. Education programme for residents. E.g., Retrofit Case Studies for existing buildings including listed buildings. Learning from earlier initiatives Go Zero, Chew Magna
- EV charging at community buildings. Retrofit of EV charging - B&NES grant scheme.

What kinds of changes/improvements to land use and buildings could create green (and/or accessible) employment or build community wealth?

- Make it easier to build wind/solar farms subject to landscape character assessments x2. **Potentially allocate renewable energy sites. Prepare a renewable energy strategy linking with local rural communities.** BWCE solar farm at Chelwood supported by some residents.
- **Flexible policies to support local sustainable businesses** (change of use for business not just homes).
- Mobile phone signals in rural areas. Internet very important. Broadband. Easier for WIFI providers to get permission for masts.
- Make it straight forward for communities to buy land and buildings as a **community asset.**
- Two large buildings in Chew Magna to be used to create job/business opportunities - former Nat West - former Mill (Tunbridge).
- Community Shops/coffee shops. Small scale office units. Ensure all new developments are zero carbon - not just homes.

MOVING AROUND

> **A network of safe, attractive and direct walking, wheeling and cycling routes and frequent, affordable, accessible, high quality public transport connects communities to key destinations. Neighbourhoods are liveable meeting every day needs.**

When initially considering the future of place Stakeholders highlighted the following:

Wish to see greater public transport connectivity connecting to the city a network of connectivity between villages and rural areas as well as to Bath, Bristol and Wells. Also take a visionary look at how community transport works - not just for elderly. E.g. Dunkerton 'Dial a Ride' develop as 'demand responsive transport'. Important to see less erosion of quality of life through better traffic management generally. Reduce impacts of through traffic and heavy lorries. Safer environment for walking and cycling - wider pavements or better/clearer walking and cycling priority. Safe access to education/schools. Better electric car infrastructure. **Needs more strategic evaluation and planning of active travel and public transport routes**.

In future what activities, opportunities and services does your community need to access nearby?

- **Entertainment for people especially young people - a hub to gather. Youth provision - a 'space' or place of their own.** Facilities for young people at allotments.
- **Local shops - mobile shops - local food production and community sharing. Local employment. Mobile medical services - e.g., travelling nurse. Affordable homes for key workers.**
- **Safer designated cycle routes to schools (x3) and e.g. CV.** Reduce school traffic. Provide more organised school bus pick-ups.
- Safety and security in isolated routes - also safe in terms of traffic. E.g. safe route to Keynsham or over Dundry Hill.
- **Keynsham as a genuine transport hub** for Whitchurch and Norton Malreward. E.g station car parking and secure cycle parking.
- See below for further comments about better public transport connectivity and active travel links.

What would encourage you to walk, wheel or cycle and use public transport more?

- Improved cycle routes. **Hub and spoke - link walking and cycling to public transport.** Quality bus stops with secure cycle storage (x2). Change of culture re cars v bikes. **Able to take bike on the bus.**
- **Safe pedestrian infrastructure within villages. More priority given to lanes/paths for cycling and walking. Better pedestrian, cycling and wheeling infrastructure.** A network of improved PROW for cycling and walking away from traffic. Pavements to walk between villages. Traffic restraints to through traffic (e.g., Queen Charlton).
- **Identify priorities for improving missing links.** Consider whole journey from rural places not as easy to centre as from urban neighbourhoods. E.g., Bath and Bristol difficult to access by bus from Chew Magna. Some places have no bus links in walking distance E.g. Hinton Blewett.
- Safe cycling and walking routes to Bristol and Bath. Link <u>Two Tunnels</u> cycle route to the centre of Bath.
- **More frequent reliable, responsive, accessible public transport.** Require access to Bristol Airport buses as part of their S106.
- Affordable public transport through **community transport**. Testing and implementation of DRT (Demand Responsive Transport) or community transport. Rural transport of the future (see Freshford 2018 workshop). Commercial bus service, connecting community transport and **car clubs**. <u>Fare Car</u> - could be spread further. Community car clubs in villages.
- To include information services about available transport.

NATURAL SPACES & BIODIVERSITY

> **All communities have ready access to nature and high-quality, biodiverse green and blue spaces supporting health and wellbeing. To reverse habitat and species loss transformational nature recovery ambitions are embedded within developments and created for existing landscapes. Regenerative local food growing is supported.**

When initially considering the future of place Stakeholders highlighted the following:

Better maintained community green space. Access to outdoor spaces. High quality well connected public realm and greenspaces. Retention of greenspaces. Nature recovery and enhanced biodiversity. Better water/river quality. Better nature and tree protection - and mitigation for loss. Additions to and proper management of hedgerows. Make dark sky policy measurable and therefore enforceable. Greater understanding of the **contribution that farming/landowners can make to biodiversity** - more positive support. Engagement with farmers/landowners about ecology, land management and regenerative farming. Working countryside. Understand landscape as place of work not just visual entity. Protect/value historical legacy - rural/industrial archelogy.

In your area what kinds of poor-quality natural spaces could be improved for people and wildlife?

- **Watercourses and flooding an opportunity? Poor water quality = poor biodiversity.**
- **Improvement of hedgerows - better management.** Make monocultural fields, hedgerows and margins more diverse.
- **Community Growing Spaces and Allotments - <u>Community Farm, Chew Valley Lake.</u>** Lack of allotments for local /community food growing. Improve access to food growing space.
- Natural spaces appreciated as they are in Hinton Blewett. Preserve green space - consider how to enhance during construction and maintain after.
- More guidance from B&NES of what to be encouraged for agricultural businesses. Understanding of where/how hedgerow pasture can be managed for improved species support.
- Put solar panels on roofs in preference to fields.
- Old Quarry Temple Cloud to Eastcourt Road - unsafe glass dump but beautiful. Fly tipping and litter always a challenge.

Are there any barriers to you (or your community) accessing nature and high-quality green space?

- **Widen access for people and wildlife corridors in combination. Lack of comprehensive plan to join up (green spaces and) active travel.**
- **Safe footpaths alongside or on roads. Lack of pavements and safe access to greenspaces.**
- Lack of access to greenspaces - access often reduced by landowners and developers. Also, farmers not respecting footpaths (Hinton Blewett).
- Lack of public transport and parking to access green space.
- Lack of affordable transport increases traffic on narrow country lanes creating danger.
- Good to see footpaths being improved and made more accessible. Needs to happen more. Accessibility of PROW - wheelchair access to stiles and kissing gates etc. Lack of inclusive accessibility - deep wet mud around gates.
- Countryside has leisure value but need to also respect farming practice.

IDENTITY & BELONGING

> **The diverse built, landscape and social identity of B&NES's urban and rural areas are understood, reflected and enhanced in new developments. These are distinctive, respectful of context, innovative and creative - contributing to places culturally, socially, economically and environmentally.**

When initially considering the future of place Stakeholders highlighted the following:

Varied views support for evidence-based growth that is appropriate, sustainable and adaptive or wish to see no new development in some areas. Identified strategic role of new development in some places - 'sustainable growth that delivers overall benefit and train station (e.g. Slatford)'. Role of Good Neighbourhood Plans and/or shaping of clear overall plan e.g. 'one for Dunkerton that is credible and has buy in'. Important to **retain and enhance rural character of landscape and buildings - how building sit in the landscape, their** styles and materials. Housing with good quality standards - consistent design standard for small rural schemes (i.e. less than 10 homes). **Implementation to match up with plans - enforceable, precise, specific.** Making use of existing buildings rather than demolish and rebuild. Retrofitting farm buildings.

How would you define what gives the rural areas of B&NES their character and identity?

- **Awareness of nature - wildlife and landscape. Views, opens space - green and blue spaces.**
- **Rural character - greenspace without housing, quiet countryside walks.**
- Any plans should be thought through. **Not one size fits all** - a good idea in one place could be a disaster somewhere else.
- Varied Historic character, architecture and local vernacular. Mining. Two up and two down. Landscape.
- Relationship with three cities - Bristol, Bath and Wells.
- Neighbourhood plans need more focus on character, **respond to local identity.**
- Local plan engagement needs to increase belonging and community ownership beyond this group. Speed important.
- Communication within communities lacking - could take advantage of online forums - WhatsApp etc?
- Farming community. Green fields farming and livestock (Chew Magna). Mix of farming and wildflower meadows.
- Amenity value of Chew Valley Lake SSSI.
- 'Mamils', Sunday drivers and tourists.

What do you value and what do you think is missing in the identity and sense of belonging in your town or village?

- **Community Spirit requires community leaders and active volunteer networks, support and identify these - benefits to mental health.**
- **Generally, community resources valued e.g. village halls, shop, school, church, pub, football club etc.** In some places need more local shops and things to do - local services.
- Peace and quiet sense of safety. Need to respect agricultural nature of areas (e.g. Chew Magna).
- Green spaces are missing especially around Bath.
- Lack of respect of people driving through (e.g. airport traffic in Chew Magna).
- Commuters not taking part in village.
- Support local food and farming (Chew Stoke). Agricultural economy - changing character of form?
- Heritage & History - industry/materials. Limestone/stone.
- Disparities of wealth impact on sense of belonging.

HOUSING & SHARED PROSPERITY

> **There is fair access to a diverse range of homes. Alongside homes - enterprises and communities have space to thrive. The delivery of affordable housing to responds to the district's demographic, social and economic needs - including homes for older people, students, key workers, gypsies, travellers, and boat dwellers, supported accommodation for residents with health and social care needs, and provision of self-build dwellings.**
>
> **Opportunities are created for sustainable economic development, the types of jobs that are needed in our communities and ensuring that there is the right type of space available for businesses to grow. Vibrant town and city centres are created.**

When initially considering the future of place Stakeholders highlighted the following:

Need for appropriate, **diverse, affordable mix of housing** to support a vibrant demographic and make better use of existing stock - enabling downsizing locally. Affordable housing - housing for key workers (needs broader definition). Affordable housing for younger people to maintain mix. More scope to move size up and down. Accessible homes for older people (Chew Stoke). More bungalows for elderly/easier access to shops (Camerton). **Supported Community Land Trusts to create 'Local Almshouses' -** purpose built accommodation for older people enabling retention of independence. More place specific housing 'no more commercial development but some affordable housing (Chew Magna)'.

What is the housing need in your area and how can this be met?

- **Small developments of affordable housing. Social housing and shared ownership.**
- **Lifetime homes to ensure independence can be maintained for as long as needed, more attractive small/compact downsizing opportunities and supported living & housing for older people.**
- Retaining or providing bungalows for older people.
- Housing for younger people that is affordable. Homes for single young people.
- Small affordable family homes and homes for older people downsizing to buy and rent.
- Community led housing - 'led by community to meet needs'.
- Affordable key worker housing for people in low paid work.
- Two bed houses. Protect the mix of housing stock - extending homes reduces number of smaller homes.
- Retrofitting to improve the existing housing stock - insulation etc.
- Urban school transport 1 bus = 30 cars.

How does housing need link to local employment and learning opportunities?

- **Housing need should be determined bottom up.**
- **Mixed housing needed to achieve a mixed demographic and be affordable for young people.**
- **More employment opportunities in villages. Greater flexibility of housing - business diversification. Barns for non agri work space.**
- Currently people have to travel further for work because housing too expensive.
- Better public and active travel links to employment and study.

HEALTHY & INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

> **Communities are involved creatively in the development of proposals. There is fair access to a diverse range of homes. Alongside homes - enterprises and communities have space to thrive. Buildings and places support strong communities and people's health and wellbeing.**

When initially considering the future of place Stakeholders highlighted the following:

Using wider determinants of wellbeing to shape plan. **Stronger vibrant community hubs, multi-use flexible spaces and infrastructure.** Sustainable development local jobs and farming - **community hubs** (Chew Stoke). **Opportunity to restore intensify community indoor and outdoor spaces -** 15-minute community principle. Access to local shops. GP services in walking distance. Retain local shops. Transition to 10-minute neighbourhood - 'village centre to be proud of (e.g. Slatford)'. Importance of Sustainable public services - schools etc. More opportunity to work locally. Greater opportunity for rural jobs and support for rural business and farm diversification. Flexible use of existing rural buildings for offices or artist's studios.

How can rural areas better support health and wellbeing?

- **Create Community Hubs - for co-working, events etc.** Enable more intensified use of existing buildings schools etc.
- **Good community centres/public buildings/places to gather - also civic outdoor spaces; parks with benches.**
- **Community volunteers and social leaders are key, they need valuing, looking after and recognising openly.**
- **Preserve wildlife and green spaces for all ages.** Plenty of open spaces and natural spaces - access to lake, countryside - wildlife. Accessible for all with good natural surveillance.
- Develop 15-minute rural neighbourhoods.
- **Things to do locally (i.e. hobbies) - and access to arts and cultural services** e.g. at Chew Valley scale - accessible for use by villages.
- Improve access to greater variety of open spaces.

What would an inclusive and healthy place look and feel like in future?

- **Somewhere to meet - and have a coffee - for older people, mums with small children. GP hubs. Good and supported, warm community halls.**
- **Supported community able to set up and run services - shops and buses etc.**
- **Good amenities - PO, doctors, dentist, pharmacist, chiropodist, village hall - community groups.**
- **Have quality walking and cycling connections - active travel - connections between villages - wider pavements. Improved networks of PROW. Maintained/preserved footpaths, bridleways and NCRs.**
- Mental wellbeing supported locally - places and contact/support to reduce social isolation.
- Access to mental health services including young people.
- Better access between communities/villages to share infrastructure e.g. schools.
- Accessible gates, good signage - benches to rest and chat.
- Review how CIL is paid so this can enable community spaces routes and buildings.
- Including food growing space.