

Spatial Development Strategy

What is the Spatial Development Strategy?

The West of England is a great place to live and our population is growing. We need a large-scale plan to make sure future development provides the right kind of jobs, homes and transport links in the right places, so that everyone can share in our success. The Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) will set out the vision for how people will live, work and play in the West of England over the next 20 years. It will influence where we provide homes, jobs and infrastructure and will be important in shaping future decisions on development.

The strategy will cover the area of the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) area, which includes Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire Councils.

The Spatial Development Strategy will be developed in partnership with residents and regional and national stakeholders. The strategy will support the sub-region to address key priorities and challenges, including climate and ecological emergencies, post-Covid recovery, and ensuring that growth in the WECA area is clean and inclusive.

The Spatial Development Strategy is a planning document and there is a legal requirement for WECA to produce this plan for the area. When it is published, it will help set the context for the local authorities' Local Plans which are being prepared alongside the SDS. This means its strategic policies will form part of the 'development plan' (alongside the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans in place in an area) against which planning applications are assessed.

How can I get involved?

Residents, local businesses, partners and stakeholders all have an important and active role to play in the development of the Spatial Development Strategy, by contributing local knowledge and expertise to improve the strategy and ensure that it reflects the diversity of the sub-region. Taking part in engagement and consultation on the SDS will be an important way to have your say and influence where homes and jobs will be provided in the future.

The Spatial Development Strategy will be developed in three stages:

Autumn engagement

An evidence base will be gathered through technical studies and public engagement. This will cover key spatial issues including:

- Housing
- Employment
- Infrastructure
- The natural and historic environment
- Placemaking and development quality
- Addressing the climate and ecological emergencies

There will be opportunities for you to contribute to the early stages of the plan development through an online survey in Autumn 2020. There will also be a series of online meetings and focus groups with local groups and organisations to hear a broad range of views. Face to face meetings may not be possible in large group formats due to restrictions on gatherings.

Consultation on the draft strategy

A draft Spatial Development Strategy will be developed based on the updated evidence gathered. This will include policies to guide development and a map-based diagram showing broad areas where growth and change is likely to be brought forward.

The plan and the supporting evidence will be published and there will be a 12-week statutory public consultation. This will be an opportunity for you to comment on the Spatial Development Strategy and your feedback will be shared with the planning inspectors who will examine the draft plan. The strategy and all the supporting documents will be available online (and in hard copy on request) and the consultation will be promoted widely.

Examination

The Spatial Development Strategy will be formally examined by a panel of planning inspectors acting on behalf of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

The inspectors will invite people to attend hearing sessions on different topics after considering the representations made during the consultation. There is no automatic right to speak at the examination, but there are opportunities to share your views as part of the proceedings.

Timeline

To ensure that the three WECA area authorities have up to date Local Plans in place as soon as possible, the Spatial Development Strategy will be developed to the timetable below:

Engagement	Consultation	Examination
Autumn 2020 – Summer 2021	Second half of 2021	2022
Development of an evidence base and plan formation. Keep people informed as work progresses	Statutory consultation on proposed plan	Plan examination
Online survey in Autumn 2020 Ongoing stakeholder engagement on evidence base	Opportunity to comment on the proposed plan and supporting evidence through formal consultation	There will be opportunities for the public to participate in the plan examination process, led by Inspectors.

There are many other plans and projects being developed at the same time as the Spatial Development Strategy, including plans for transport improvements, and Local Plans for the three WECA authorities. It's important that we hear views on all these pieces of work, and it is therefore possible that some consultations will run at the same time. We will work together to make sure the scope of different consultations is clearly communicated. We will also work to ensure that relevant comments submitted to one consultation process are shared with the teams working on related projects.

Our consultation and engagement commitments

The West of England Combined Authority aims to support strong, active and inclusive communities, who are informed and involved in decision-making and enable us to improve the sub-region to enhance the quality of life for our residents. We will:

- Be clear about the purpose of engagement
- Allow sufficient time for engagement
- Be open and honest, clear and concise in our communication
- Be inclusive and accessible
- Work with stakeholders from all sectors
- Tailor communication to reach a wide range of people including those seldom heard
- Feedback results and explain how community input contributed to shaping the strategy

We want to speak to a broad range of people so that we hear a wide range of views. This may mean we need to offer targeted engagement with different communities so that all groups have an opportunity to be involved.

Contact us:

For up to date information about the Spatial Development Strategy visit: <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/west-of-england-joint-planning/>

For enquiries email: planning@westofengland-ca.gov.uk