



Ref:

(For official use only)

Proposed Submission Core Strategy Representation Form

This consultation is in order for representations to be made on whether the Sedgemoor District Council Proposed Submission Core Strategy Draft Plan is Legally Compliant and is 'sound'. Legal Compliance and soundness are explained in the Notes on Commenting on the Core Strategy Draft Plan, available at www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/corestrategy. Please read these notes before making your comments.

Please Note: You should be aware that any written comments submitted on the Core Strategy that you make, must be made publicly available by the Council. This includes on the Council's website. Personal Information given on this questionnaire will only be used by Sedgemoor District Council in connection with the Sedgemoor Local Development Framework, and not for any other purpose.

This form has two parts –

Part A - Personal Details and Part B – Your representation(s). Please fill in a separate sheet for each representation you wish to make.

PART A- Personal Details

Personal details

Agent's Details (if applicable)

Title	Mr	
First Name	Roger	
Last Name	Mitchinson	
Job Title (where relevant)	Strategy Lead Officer	
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PART B – Your Representations

3. To which part of the Core Strategy does this representation relate?

Paragraph

Para's 5.130 – 5.147

Policy box

Policy D11 and Tables 5.12 and 5.13

Proposals map

All maps relating to Economic Prosperity

4. Legal Compliance

Legally Compliant means the Core Strategy and Proposals Map should conform to the Town and Country Planning Regulations, 2004 and the 2008 amendments.

Please see 'Notes on Commenting on the Core Strategy Draft Plan' (available at www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/corestrategy) for further details.

4.1 Do you think the Core Strategy and Proposals Map is Legally Compliant?

(Please mark one answer)

Yes

No

Please give reasons for your answer here, being as precise as possible.

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

The Plan is legally compliant

4.2. If your answer is 'no', please set out what changes you consider necessary to make the Core Strategy and Proposals Map legally compliant, and why. Please be as precise as possible.

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

5. Soundness

In order for the Core Strategy and Proposals Map to be 'sound' it should be justified, effective, and consistent with national policy.

- '*Justified*' means the Core Strategy should be based on a robust and credible evidence base, and should be the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives.
- '*Effective*' means the Core Strategy should be demonstrably deliverable and sufficiently flexible to cope with changing circumstances.
- '*Consistent with national policy*' means the Core Strategy should conform to national planning policy or if it does not, must clearly justify a different approach based on local circumstances.

Please see 'Notes on Commenting on the Core Strategy Draft Plan' (available at www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/corestrategy) for further details.

5.1. Do you consider the Core Strategy and Proposals Map sound as a whole?

(Please mark one answer)

Yes No

5.2. If you consider the Core Strategy and Proposals Map unsound is it:

(Please mark all that apply)

Not Justified

Not Effective

Not Consistent with National Policy

5.3. Please give reasons for your answer, being as precise as possible, and limiting your comments to the whole document or to areas of policy that you consider missing or inadequate.

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

See attached Sheet:

5.4 If your answer is 'no', please set out what changes you consider necessary in order to make the Core Strategy and Proposals Map sound, and why. It will be helpful if you are able to put forward suggested wording if you consider a policy is missing. Please be as precise as possible.

Please note your representation should cover succinctly all the information, evidence and supporting information necessary to support/justify the representation and the suggested change, as there will not be a subsequent opportunity to make further representations based on the original representation at publication stage.

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

Paragraphs 5.130 – 5.147 (Economic Prosperity), policy D11 and Tables 5.12 and 5.13 together with associated 'Economic Prosperity' references elsewhere in the document should be rewritten to reflect the ELR (Ekogen) evidence base, addressing the concerns set out in the attached 'Test of Soundness' submission from Taunton Deane Borough Council. In short, the evidence base should be brought up to date and accurate, no new industrial/warehousing allocations should be made, the potential for alternative uses on existing sites should be assessed with a view to 'deallocating' the existing oversupply, and a thorough Stage 1 assessment should be made to identify additional town centre office opportunities if, after deallocation is assessed, further office land is actually required.

6. Sustainability Appraisal

6.1 Please use this box to make any comments on the methodology used for the Sustainability Appraisal. Comments on the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal and how this has informed the Core Strategy policies should be included in the soundness question above.

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

No comment

7. Participation at Examination

7.1 If your representation is seeking a change, do you consider it necessary to participate in person at the examination hearing?

(Please tick one answer)

Yes

No

7.2 If you have answered 'yes', please outline why you consider this to be necessary.

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

As currently worded, the Plan is not 'Sound' and the implications of this could impact on the Core Strategy and wider economic, environmental and sustainable wellbeing of Taunton Deane.

Please note the Inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who have indicated that they wish to participate at the oral part of the examination.

Test of Soundness. Why the Sedgemoor District Core Strategy is not ‘Justified’ or ‘Effective’.

Background

The Economic Prosperity chapter of the Core Strategy does not reflect the tests of soundness laid out in PPS12 paragraphs 4.36 and 4.37 as it is not ‘founded on a robust and credible evidence base backed up by facts’, nor PPS12 paragraph 4.45 in that it is not ‘coherent with the strategies of neighbouring authorities’.

The evidence base for Economic Prosperity’ is the EkoGen Employment Land Review (ELR), evidencing the job growth and consequential floorspace requirements over the Plan period and the Councils Economic Development Strategy specifying the required actions to secure higher value-added knowledge driven growth within the Borough. (paragraph 5.131 of Core Strategy).

The ELR forecasts an aspirational job growth of 10,200 net new jobs over the period 2006-2026. Around 72% are proposed in non Class B uses, thus requiring traditional ‘employment land’ for 2,640 office related jobs and 157 industrial/warehousing jobs, equating to the need for 47,522 sq.m office and 5,490 sq.m. industrial/warehousing space (paragraphs 3.9 and 3.10 of ELR) over the Plan period. The Core Strategy adopts a more conservative employment figure of 9,160 net new jobs.

By contrast, Table 5.12 of the Core Strategy identifies proposals for 50,500 sq.m. office space (2650 jobs) and 452,400 sq.m. industrial/warehousing space (9,785 jobs)

Issues associated with Class B1a (Office) use

Within Taunton Deane, the evidence base suggests that net office growth over the Plan period 2006 – 2026 is projected to increase by around 2,062 jobs (around 37,000 sq.m. floorspace). This is reflected in the Borough Councils Core Strategy. By contrast, whilst the proposed office quantum in Sedgemoor Districts Core Strategy appears at first sight to be consistent with the ELR evidence base, Taunton Deane wish to raise the following concerns:

1. Policy D11 specifies only a minimum number of new jobs and Table 5.12 is only a guide, not policy. Failure to specify maximum numbers (and floorspace) and failure to distinguish the office sub-sector requirements could ‘open the door’ to considerably more office development than required, which, when considered alongside the combined office job projections in Sedgemoor and Taunton Deane will directly compete with and impact on projected job requirements, allocations on brownfield regeneration sites and the role and function of Taunton Deane;
2. Proposals for Puriton Energy Park do not specify what category of Class B jobs are acceptable and thus overall office provision in the Borough may increase considerably if this use is developed here. As a partly greenfield, non sustainable, out of town location without restriction on office use, this could directly compete with and impact on projected job requirements, allocations on brownfield regeneration sites and the role and function of Taunton Deane;
3. References in the Plan (eg bullet point page 48) also fail to distinguish between B class uses, thus opening the opportunity for additional office growth in non sequential locations and contrary to national policy, as already occurring in the district (eg Express Park and NE Bridgwater) which without restriction, and recognition of combined office job projections in Taunton Deane and Sedgemoor would compete with and potentially undermine allocations on brownfield regeneration sites and the role and function of Taunton Deane ;
4. Table 5.13 (Monitoring and Review) reinforces these potential concerns, targeting an additional 540,000 sq.m B1a and B1 b floorspace (office and research and development). Whilst recognising the distinction between offices and Class B1b, most of the latter is in effect ‘office based’ in labs and studio’s and combined, this quantum is over x10 office floorspace identified in their ELR and Table 5.12;
5. Targeting development of up to 540,000 sq.m. would compete with and potentially undermine Taunton Deane’s adopted plans for town centre brownfield regeneration and create non sustainable travel patterns from Taunton Deane and beyond, for employment purposes;

6 .The ELR requires town centre offices to be a key component of the office offer. Only 10,000 sq.m. is proposed within Bridgwater Town centre, yet notwithstanding the issues raised above, over 27,000 sq.m. is already proposed at NE Bridgwater, and 5,000 sq.m. on Bristol Road. This is not compatible with Government policy and as less constrained, may undermine existing and future regeneration opportunities both within Bridgwater town centre and importantly, potentially compete with and undermine adopted strategies to regenerate Taunton town centre with office led development.

7. The lack of importance given to office uses within town centres is borne out in policy P2 (Bridgwater town centre) which simply refers to 'appropriate office and residential uses on upper floors' as a minor bullet point. The Plan provides no evidence that a thorough Stage 1 employment land assessment has been undertaken to assess additional sequential town centre regeneration opportunities rather than allow continued out of centre office growth. As a consequence, the sequential office wording in Policy D11 already allows out of centre office proposals, potentially resulting in a proliferation of easier to develop greenfield office opportunities that will undermine the government policy approach to town centre office regeneration objectives both in Bridgwater and Taunton town centres.

For the above reasons, Taunton Deane Borough Council considers that the Plan fails the test of 'Soundness' as it is not 'Effective', having little regard to or coherence with the strategies of neighbouring authorities. Further, as reflected in elements of the Plan, it is not 'Justified' against its evidence base.

Issues associated with Class B1 (non office), B2 and B8 use.

As background, within Taunton Deane the evidence base suggests that net industrial/warehouse job growth over the period 2006-2026 is projected at around 534 jobs (25,300 sq.m. floorspace), which is reflected within the Borough Councils Core Strategy submission. Taunton Deane wishes to raise the following concerns with Sedgemoor Districts Core Strategy:

1. Policy D11 specifies only a minimum number of new jobs. Failure to specify maximum numbers (including floorspace) and failure to distinguish the industrial/warehouse sub-sector requirements could 'open the door' to considerably more development than required, which, when considered alongside the combined industrial/warehouse job projections in Sedgemoor and Taunton Deane will directly compete with and potentially undermine job growth and opportunities within Taunton Deane;
2. Table 5.12 does not reflect the ELR evidence base, identifying a x82 increase on required floorspace provision and a x65 increase on targeted job creation than identified through the ELR;
3. Job creation and floorspace could, theoretically be even higher since the Core Strategy Table 5.12 is a guide to floorspace requirements and not set in a policy;
4. An aim of the Core Strategy is to increase self containment. Such proposed growth will result in inward commuting which isn't sustainable, will draw labour from Taunton, thus undermining Taunton's strategy for increased self containment;
5. The scale, range and opportunities for development will directly overshadow and compete against proposals within Taunton Deane which reflect the economic evidence base and are of a scale which would not undermine the scale of development requirements set out in Sedgemoor Districts evidence base;
6. It will result in the needless loss of greenfield land, contrary to regeneration and environmental objectives;
7. The Plan fails to specify any hectareage or site boundaries for these proposals, thus potentially opening up the opportunity for additional opportunistic extensions to these sites by varying site density calculations or 'rounding off' of sites. Thus further floorspace could be approved above that in the ELR or even the Core Strategy 'allocations', resulting in an even greater impact on the local Taunton economy.

For the above reasons, Taunton Deane Borough Council considers that the Plan fails the test of 'Soundness'. It is not 'Justified', failing to reflect its own evidence base, is not based on factual evidence and therefore is neither robust nor credible. Consequently, it also is not 'Effective' as it is not coherent with and may potentially undermine the strategies of neighbouring authorities.

Employment Omissions

Taunton Deane Borough Council also considers that the Core Strategy also fails to reflect a number of additional elements of factual 'evidence' :

1. Paragraph 4.2 of the ELR notes that since 2003 employment land has continued to be developed but accurate figures are not available. Whilst this may call into question the robustness of the evidence base, however paragraph 4.23 indicates that between 2006-2008 26,350 sq.m. of B1 space has been developed (not specified whether office), 12,400 sq.m. of B2 space, 2,000 sq.m. of B8 and 88,000 sq.m. of "Mixed" use. Allowance for development of this quantum of floorspace has not been made in the Core Strategy requirements despite being within the Plan period;

2. Assuming the bulk of the B1 to be offices and the mixed use to be the completion of the Livestock Market and associated facilities and the Wiseman Dairies development, and using established jobs to floorspace ratio's, completions over the Plan period years 2006-2008 may have created an additional 2,890 Class B jobs. This has occurred since the base date but has not been incorporated or reflected in the Core Strategy;

3. The Borough Council has no access to Sedgemoor District employment growth over the period 2008-2010 so cannot comment on growth over this period. However, it is likely that some development must have occurred within the Borough over this period and this should be subtracted from future net growth requirements.

4. The ELR site matrix also identifies a number of additional sites either committed or developable. The Council does not have access to Sedgemoor Districts records but there are known commitments remaining to be developed at Express Park (at least 1.94 ha office and 5.9 ha industrial/warehousing) which could provide for around 10,000 sq.m. additional out of town office space (c526 jobs) and 23,600 sq.m. other employment space (c472 jobs). As these are existing commitments allowance should be made for job and floorspace growth arising from this and thus further reducing additional requirements in the Core Strategy;

5. Other sites listed in the ELR matrix include land adjoining Bairdwear (3 hectares), Highbridge (1.8 hectares), Westonzoyland (3.5 hectares), Dunball Puriton (41 hectares) and land adjoining J22 and Isleport Farm Highbridge (41 hectares). Whilst the status of these sites are unclear, if they are proposed to be retained their potential for job and floorspace growth must be reflected in Core Strategy requirements, otherwise the oversupply identified in Table 5.12 will increase even more significantly;

6. In addition, the Plan estimates the creation of an additional 20,000 FTE jobs to be created during construction of Hinkley Power Station (5,000 at any one time and 900 when operational) which are in addition to the 9,160 net new jobs identified for within the Plan period. An unspecified land area at South Bridgwater is reserved for employment uses associated with this development. Some of these jobs will be locally generated but have not been included in job and floorspace requirements in Table 5.12, potentially further undermining the Plans relationship with its own evidence base.

For the above reasons Taunton Deane Borough Council considers that the Plan fails the test of Soundness in that it is neither credible nor robust and thus is not 'Justified'. Not only does it fail to reflect its own evidence base, its evidence base is incomplete.

Conclusion

The proposals for Economic Prosperity in the Sedgemoor Core Strategy are thus not considered 'sound'; being neither credible nor robust in reflecting its own evidence base, which is also incomplete. This element of the Plan is therefore not 'Justified' and fails to meet Section 20(5) (b) of the 2004 Act.

Although the RSS is no longer a relevant document it should be noted that all background documents referred to the need for an integrated approach to economic development to ensure complimentary rather than competition between Bridgwater and Taunton/Wellington to enable economic growth to be channelled to best effect.

Such sustainable principles still hold true. Indeed, a further test of Soundness ('Effective') requires consistency with the strategies of neighbouring authorities. The overallocation in Sedgemoor's Core Strategy will result in

environmental impact through unjustified development of greenfield land, increase car usage in less sustainable locations and negative impact on potential regeneration opportunities as out of centre greenfield rather than the town centre sites are the focus for growth. In the wider area, the scale of development will also increase car commuting along the M5 from Taunton in order to sustain the employment provision and due to the unjustified scale of provision compared with Taunton, directly compete rather than complement with and impact on the local Taunton Deane economy, potentially reducing self containment, undermining identified brownfield regeneration allocations and stifling economic potential of Taunton which, unlike Bridgwater, has growth point status, and thus should be functioning as a higher order settlement. It therefore also fails the 'Effective' test of Soundness.

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Taunton Deane Borough Council

November 2010.