

Strategic Development Location – M5 to A38 Corridor - Banwell North Somerset

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Location Map

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1.0 Location characteristics

1.1 Site Location

Land northwest of Banwell.

1.2 Size

Approx. 106 ha gross, 54ha net residential area.

1.3 Relevant planning status and designations

- Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to the south, wildlife site to the east, and heritage designations to the southeast. Areas of Priority Habitat are present to the east.
- Village has two Local Green Space designations, one at Riverside.
- The Banwell bypass route is a safeguarded scheme in the Sites and Policies Plan, Part 1: Development Management Policies.

1.4 Current land use

Predominantly agricultural.

2.0 Suitability (Constraints & Opportunities)

2.1 Strategic Opportunity

The JSP - Towards the Emerging Spatial Strategy consultation identified the M5 to A38 Corridor as accommodating up to a further 5,400 dwellings in the plan period to 2036. The background evidence (Assessment of Strategic Development Locations Beyond Settlement Boundaries) identified Banwell along this corridor as a location with strategic development potential to be explored further. Further work has identified potential for around 1,900 dwellings at Banwell that, alongside the potential at Churchill/Langford, has reduced the overall dwelling potential on the M5 to A38 Corridor to around 4,700 dwellings.

2.2 Site characteristics

The site is characterised by open, and gently undulating pasture land set against the backdrop of the lower slopes of the AONB. The character of the area to the south of Banwell is heavily influenced by the steep, often wooded slopes of the AONB.

To the east the area drops down to the Locking and Banwell moors landscape and gently rises to the north at Woolvers Hill. The M5 motorway is a dominant feature to the west of the area set in a cutting in parts. To the west of Stonebridge, a shallow valley runs towards the motorway. Wolverhill Road passes through the site linking Banwell back into WsM near J21 of the M5.

2.3 Physical & Environmental constraints

Heritage: area to the east of the village has a particularly rich heritage including a former Abbey, Scheduled Monument, Conservation Area and various listed buildings. The Concept Diagram illustrates an indicative setting to these features.

Archaeology: The area, particularly around Stonebridge and Wolvershill Road, is identified as having moderate to high archaeological value including nationally significant Roman archaeology. The area between Riverside and East Street has the potential for medieval archaeology, palaeochannels and waterlogged archaeology. It is therefore expected that there would be features of interest that may impact upon development potential.

Landscape: The development area sits on higher land and falls into the J2: River Yeo Rolling Valley Farmland Landscape Character Area of moderate character in good condition. Lower lying landscape to east – Locking and Banwell Moors should be avoided due to its flood risk status. It would be desirable to create distinct blocks of development that respect the existing character and form of existing settlements along the Mendip Hills edge rather than expanses of linear development.

Mendip Hills AONB

Although the site is located outside of the AONB, the potential for adverse impact on it is present. The landscape strategy may be beneficial in helping to accommodate development with minimal impact on the AONB.

Ecology: The area is likely to be utilised by horseshoe bats for foraging and commuting particularly to the south of the village. The Banwell Ochre Caves are a key feature nearby and one of the component SAC sites¹. The inclusion of specific features within the new development including for example ‘dark corridors’² should be considered as part of a wider ecological strategy including potential for replacement habitat and safeguarding and enhancement of key habitats.

Opportunity to provide a green corridor to the west of Stonebridge that links to the Grumblepill Rhyne corridor at Parklands Village (shown indicatively in the Concept Diagram). This feature would track a depression in the landscape potentially incorporating water management features.

Consideration will be given to the protection of nationally significant species and habitats, notably Section 41 habitats and species. Examples of Section 41 habitats include: species rich lowland meadows, wet woodlands, traditional orchards, and reed beds. Examples of Section 41 species that have suffered sharp declines in population and/or distribution, include the Common Toad, Hedgehog, House Sparrow, Brown Hare and Skylark, as well as many insect species. Wildlife corridors and features such as ‘stepping stone habitats’ and other natural features need to be incorporated into new development to safeguard key habitats identified within Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006).

Flood risk: The area of search for development is located in flood zone 1. Impacts on flood risk elsewhere need to be considered. Further work is therefore required to understand the flood risk issues associated with development and supporting infrastructure, to identify possible options to mitigate any impacts. These may include both site-specific measures e.g. sustainable drainage systems (taking into account infiltration constraints), and more strategic solutions to enable the local

¹ Special Areas of Conservation – Areas given special protection under the EU Habitats Directive which is transposed into UK law by the Habitats and Conservation of Species Regulations 2010.

² Dark corridors typically comprise linear green spaces including hedgerow and possibly water features and are designed to specific specifications to maintain a certain level of illuminance.

environment to more effectively manage and provide long-term storage of surface water.

Other: The Proposed Southern Strategic Support Main Pipeline (water) runs through the area on its eastern edge up to Riverside. This is currently being delivered (planning application ref: 16/P/1095/F2). This coupled with other constraints on this part of the site make this a particularly sensitive area.

2.4 Existing development schemes

To the east of the village is a proposed housing allocation, east of Wolvershill Road for 44 dwellings (outline approved subject to legal agreement).

2.5 Opportunity

Banwell is located just outside Weston-super-Mare (WsM) on the A371. This main route through the village is subject to significant congestion at peak times exacerbated by a pinch point on the network at West Street. Strategic development would be required to be supported (and would contribute to) new transport infrastructure including the Banwell Bypass. Potential is identified to create a new garden village to the northwest of Banwell.

3.0 Land uses, capacity, availability & viability

3.1 Mix of uses

At this stage the mix of uses is expected to include residential, employment (including distribution (B8)), small-scale retail, leisure and recreation, education and open space. Local Centre likely to contain mix of uses with location and scale to be confirmed through local planning process. Areas for surface water storage are also envisaged that could be required on, off and / or near site.

3.2 Employment (type/ha)

Employment provision and location to be addressed through the local planning process. Assumptions and suggestions provided here are initial scenarios for testing. North Somerset Council are currently preparing an Employment Land Review that will inform employment planning at the SDLs through the local plan.

The area is located close to Weston-super-Mare and the Junction 21 Enterprise Area where there is a significant scale of employment development planned. The role this SDL may play needs to be addressed further in this context.

Potential for distribution type businesses well connected to the M5 and the new Banwell Bypass. Initial scenario to test for around 5ha of B Class land that could translate to around 15,000sqm.

3.3 Housing typology / density

Low to medium density Garden Village. Average net residential densities of around 30 to 40dph. A range of densities are recommended to create variety and character within the new settlement and to respond appropriately to context and environmental constraints.

3.4 Capacity

About 1,900 units.

3.5 Availability

Multiple landownerships present, although majority of land in area of search under control of single developer.

Various other sites submitted in area totalling around 37.1 ha.

Additional land required to deliver transport interventions and other infrastructure necessary to support development.

3.6 Viability

Viability likely to be dependent upon alternative sources of funding. See viability evidence for further information.

4.0 Concept Diagram

See Appendix 1 –Concept Diagram

*The Concept Diagrams provide the broad location or area of search for growth in each SDL denoted by the diagonal hatching. The extent of this covers the **gross development area** within which the range of land uses and features necessary to support the new development could potentially be provided, including residential, employment, education, retail, leisure, community uses, green infrastructure, and water storage as required. Development areas to be refined through more detailed work through the local planning process.*

5.0 Draft policy expectations for location

5.1 Vision

- To create a new garden village supported by the phased delivery of transport infrastructure.
- The form of development should seek to respect the character and separate identity of Banwell and respond sensitively to the semi-rural context.
- Development form to avoid linear expanses of development. Blocks of development sitting within landscape to be explored further through masterplanning.
- Improved connectivity between WSM, the airport and Bristol.

5.2 Housing capacity and other land uses

- About 1,900 units of a range of types and sizes including affordable provision.
- New employment development shall be investigated and masterplanned into the development. Opportunities to link to new transport infrastructure should be explored and the scope to support distribution type businesses.
- Community uses, to be identified and integrated through masterplanning.
- Two primary schools, one of 2.4ha and the other of 3.4ha for future expansion, both including early years provision. Located to be accessible to

surrounding neighbourhoods to maximise walking to school opportunities along safe and attractive routes.

- A secondary school is required for this and the Churchill SDL with location to be defined through more detailed masterplanning, and consideration of education requirements across North Somerset.
- Land to be identified to accommodate strategic transport mitigations and other infrastructure including both on-site, near-site and off-site requirements.
- Primary care health facility.
- Mixed use local centre to be provided, to be accessible to surrounding residential neighbourhoods and well connected to main highway network and public transport routes.

5.3 Transport

- The development will contribute to strategic transport including a new link between the M5 and the A38 comprising a package of schemes. To include a new motorway junction (J21a), the Banwell Bypass, and an onward connection to the A38, east of Langford. Additional improvements required to local network.
- This is a summary headline of the key transport requirements, is not definitive of the required transport mitigations and further detailed work will be progressed on transport matters. See Joint Transport Study and background papers for further detail.

5.4 Green Infrastructure

- The principle of multi-functional and interconnected green infrastructure should be pursued to offer multiple benefits including to wildlife and biodiversity, recreation, and flood attenuation and to include requirements for delivery, future maintenance and management.
- Investigation of an area of open space between Banwell and the proposed bypass linking through to open countryside to the east.
- The approach to green infrastructure should seek to support the rural character of the area for example by creating 'soft' edges to the development, blending well into the surrounding countryside. Green infrastructure is also likely to be important in protecting the setting of heritage features, and the setting of the AONB.
- A green corridor linking Stonebridge to the Grumblepill Rhyne at Parklands Village should be investigated including its use for bat foraging and commuting and surface water management. This could form a further phase of the dark corridor already established at Parklands Village.
- Additional strategic green infrastructure to avoid significant impacts to Natura 2000 sites.

5.5 Infrastructure requirements

- Ecological mitigation including features designed to safeguard habitats and species, retention of key habitats and replacement where necessary.
- Suitable drainage infrastructure including to reduce rate of run-off, and provision for long-term storage, and with benefits to water quality. Opportunities to enhance biodiversity should be explored. Selected strategy to take into account constraints on infiltration drainage.

- Sustainable energy infrastructure including opportunities for heat networks explored early in order that any enabling measures can be secured to enable an efficient and effective delivery. The form and layout of development, and the distribution of land uses is likely to be a key issue in designing the infrastructure. Management of the infrastructure going forward should also be considered.
- Potential requirements for utilities upgrades.

5.6 Energy

- Opportunities to secure a zero carbon new settlement will be explored including incorporating a range of sustainable measures, including potential district heating, renewables, energy generation, passivhaus standard homes, homeworking measures and electric car charging facilities etc.

6.0 Barriers to delivery - critical interventions

6.1 Key identified risks to suitability, availability and achievability

The critical risks are:

- Un-coordinated piecemeal development that fails to secure necessary improvements to the range of services, facilities and infrastructure requirements. Pressure to bring forward sites earlier than planned has the potential to lead to ineffective development and could undermine a joined-up, masterplan-led approach to development. This could lead to land uses being poorly arranged.
- Delivery of strategic **transportation** improvements delivered at a suitable time to facilitate development within the JSP plan period. Early prioritisation / delivery required, particularly for the Banwell Bypass section.
- Drainage constraints.
- Ecological/ biodiversity impacts.
- Heritage issues are significant to the east of the village and should be carefully addressed.
- Impact on the AONB.
- Land assembly – ensuring sufficient land is assembled to support development and deliver enabling infrastructure.

6.2 Key actions needed to reduce risks (e.g. investment in new infrastructure, dealing with fragmented land ownership, environmental improvement, or a need to review development plan policy)

- Collaborative approach between public and private partners to achieve planning policy framework through local plan process, masterplanning and development management processes to secure consensus on phasing of infrastructure and approach to delivery.
- Clear understanding of transport requirements, options, and costs supported by funding strategy and means of delivery. Consensus achieved with development partners on schemes required and means of delivery including land assembly, particularly for Banwell Bypass. Pursue opportunities for funding.
- Review of developer contributions and wider funding strategy as part of selection of appropriate development delivery model. Some form of equalisation agreement is likely to be required to support an equitable return for land forming part of the overall development.

- Ongoing dialogue between flooding agencies. Further investigations are required to understand the existing drainage conditions of the area, the additional impacts of development including volumes of run-off, and the potential options for mitigation if required.
- It is expected that ecological issues can be addressed through masterplanning and the integration of suitable features/safeguarding on or off site. Further engagement with Natural England required to scope additional evidence required. Ecological issues to be addressed on a strategic basis across SDL.
- Further consideration of landscape strategy including in consultation with the Mendip Hills AONB unit.
- Further dialogue with Heritage England to ensure proposals provide adequate safeguarding of heritage assets. Requirement for heritage report where SDL relates to heritage assets.

7.0 Indicative trajectory

7.1 Indicative lead-in time to initial completions assumed 8 years to allow for strategic transportation measures to be funded and programmed. Lead-in largely dictated by transport matters including requirements for further technical work and land acquisition. Indicative build-out rate dependant on number of development partners- assuming 50 per sales outlet per annum. Estimated annual average rate of 158 dwellings with peak years delivering 200 per year.

Critical dependencies include provision of suitable ecological/environmental mitigation; delivery of transport/ other infrastructure; and legal/delivery structures in place. May require alternative models of delivery to expedite delivery of transport infrastructure to facilitate residential development.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Banwell									50	75	150

2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	Capacity within Plan period
200	200	200	200	200	200	200	150	75	1900

Post 2036	Total Capacity
0	1900

Appendix 1 –Concept Diagram



