

MINUTES OF THE PARISH MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2020

HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM AT 6.30pm

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**Public Forum**

- A) One member of the public was in attendance of the meeting.
- B) Cllr Linda Vijeh was in attendance of the meeting. Please see the attached report (**Appendix 1**) written by Cllr Linda Vijeh for SCC/SSDC Councillor Monthly Report.

**3199 PRESENT** Cllrs Ann Winter – Chair, Ray Buckler, Barry Mosley, Ann Richards, Julie Layzell, Jon Tipping and Richard Clifford.

**3200 APOLOGIES** Cllrs Philippa Woodman and David Johnson.

**3201 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** None.

**3202 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** Minutes of the meeting held in September having previously been circulated were approved as a true record and correct record of the meeting, subject to the amendment to the typo in the attendance and apologies section. Cllrs approved, seconded, and unanimously agreed.

**Action:** *Clerk to amend minutes.*

**3203 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR** Cllr David Johnson informed the Chair and Clerk before the meeting that he was stepping down as Vice-Chair but remains on the Council. Cllr Ann Winter informed the Council that Cllr Ray Buckler accepted and agreed to be the Vice-Chair. This was unanimously agreed by the Council.

**Action:** *None.*

**3204 COMPLETION OF FORMS FOLLOWING ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

**Action:** *Clerk to send forms via email to Cllr Ray Buckler for completion.*

**3205 PLAYING FIELD UPDATE**

- 1) BI-MONTHLY UPDATE – Cllr Ray Buckler informed the Council of the following:
  - South Somerset District Council Area Committee Meeting is due to happen shortly and the grant applied for by the Playingfield Committee is to be discussed. If the grant application is successful, the funds will be paid into the parish council's bank account.
  - Weekly checks are being carried out and recorded. A minor repair to the skatepark is required but the equipment is still safe to use in the meantime.
  - Cllr Buckler requested permission to purchase new signs to highlight information regarding Covid 19. Signs cost approximately £15 each. The Council unanimously agreed to purchase the necessary signs.
  - Maintenance – current contractors and arrangements in place working very well. Once last grass cut is required, Cllr ray Buckler to speak with the contractor and request this. Clerk to issue another 12-month contract to contractors and enquire if current pay rates remain the same or if they need to be increased.

**Action:** *Cllr Ray Buckler to order new signs and request an additional grass cut. Clerk to issue a new contract to contractors.*

**3206 PRE-PLANNING – PROPOSED BROADWAY HILL DEVELOPMENT** Following the on from the September meeting, this item was listed on the agenda for further discussions concerning the proposed development. Following the public consultation event, the Council forwarded to the developer approximately 200 handwritten comments and emails from a member of the public. It is unknown how many comments were sent to the developer directly. The main concerns raised by residents were:

- Concerns over the number of houses proposed/size of the development.
- The volume of traffic that will be created around the village as a result of the development.

- School places – the proposed development could see approximately 20 additional children which would increase existing pressures on the 8 classes currently at Neroche Primary School.
- The indicative site layout presented shows a small section of land to remain undeveloped at the top-left side of the site which could lend itself to an access point for possible further development in the future.
- Affordable housing to be pepper potted throughout development, not all grouped as currently shown.

The Council further discussed the proposed development and discussion were had regarding the following:

- Affordable housing – who would be eligible for affordable housing and how are the costs regarding affordability calculated.
- Natural England's recent announcement regarding phosphates and the Somerset Levels and Moors – all planning application for the foreseeable will be put into abeyance by South Somerset District Council until a plan is agreed on how development can be nutrient neutral.
- Other planning applications for new housing within the village – approximately 100 dwellings have been given planning permission in recent years. Broadway has seen an increase in new dwellings by approximately 230 dwellings.
- Street lighting – if development is to go ahead, high-level street lighting should not be installed, only low-level lighting.

The Council still unanimously objects to the development.

**Action:** *None.*

### 3207 PLANNING APPLICATION(S)

- 1) 20/02839/HOU – 18 St Peters Close, Horton – The erection of a front porch/lobby and orangery to the rear.

The application was discussed and the Council voted to unanimously support the application.

- 2) 20/02032/HYBRID - 14 Channells Lane, Horton - Hybrid planning application for the demolition of existing residential dwelling (No. 14 Channells Lane) and replacement with shared access to development of 3 No. residential dwellings with appropriate access, turning areas and parking provisions. One dwelling (plot 1) applied for as full application and two dwellings (plots 2 and 3) as outline applications.

The applicant of the application was in attendance of the meeting and gave an overview of the proposals to the Council. The Council asked the applicant questions relating to:

- If the existing dwelling was to be demolished. It was confirmed that it is to be.
- Parking issues – applicant is gifting land to adjoining neighbours to allow them to have off-road parking.
- Concerns over maintenance of overgrown boundaries.
- Emergency vehicle access – the applicant confirmed that the proposal will be accessible by emergency vehicles and will not create additional on road traffic which could potentially block the existing narrow road.
- Refuse bins – the collection will be in line with existing arrangements for Channells Lane.
- Adjoining neighbours – the applicant confirmed they are agreeable to the application. Party wall notices will be served in due course.
- Ecology – large tree in existing garden and bat presence. Only one bat droppings found in the existing garage. Proposed buildings will use bat tiles to allow for bat roosting.
- Demolition – neighbours may be concerned with the dust and noise when existing dwelling to be demolished. The applicant confirmed they will bear this in mind and keep disruption to a minimum.
- Concerns regarding the volume of traffic on Channells Lane.

The Council considered the above points and subsequently voted to support the application, subject to the above concerns being addressed by the applicant.

**Action:** *Clerk to forward comments to SSDC.*

- 3208 WEBSITE UPDATE** TEEC required some technical information from the Council regarding the existing website migration, Cllr Ray Buckler provided this information. It has been confirmed that the Council own the current domain which should mean a smooth transition. The Clerk has lost access to the existing website as the current provider has removed access to this.  
**Action:** Clerk to ask TEEC for a further update on timescales for the website going live.
- 3209 SPEEDING ISSUES AROUND VILLAGE – SPEED INDICATOR DEVICE** Following this issue being raised in a previous meeting, Cllr Ray Buckler sought costs in relation to renting a SID from Martock Parish Council. Martock have confirmed their costs for rental are £75.00 per week. It was recommended to place a SID in one location for two weeks to record vehicle speeds and the number of vehicle movements. The Council will enquire further with regards to the installation of SID etc and if training is required to do this. It was agreed, subject to the above, the SID will first be installed on Broadway Hill.  
**Action:** Cllr Ray Bucker to find out more on the installation requirements. Clerk to enquire with Martock PC over availability.
- 3210 GREAT PARISH TREE GIVEAWAY** To be noted - an application was submitted to SSDC. Clerk to report back when a response from SSDC is received.  
**Action:** None.
- 3211 DOG WASTE BIN – GOOSE LANE/PUBLIC FOOTPATH** A resident from Riverside contacted the Clerk with concerns over the dog waste bin along the adjoining footpath and asked if the council could request with SSDC that the bin is either relocated or emptied more often. It was agreed that the Clerk would contact SSDC and ask better arrangements are put in place for the emptying of the bin.  
**Action:** None at this time.
- 3212 FINANCE**
- A) To Approve Financial Statement - Unanimously Approved.
  - B) Proposal – Draft Budget 2021/2022 - Unanimously Approved.
  - C) Proposal – To approve payment of the following cheques:
    1. M F Salmon – Grass cutting – No Invoice received. Item to be listed on the next agenda.
    2. C Duff – Wages and expenses - Cheque No. 000771 - £518.78 – Unanimously Approved.
    3. TEEC – Website - Cheque No. 000772 - £300.00 – Unanimously Approved.
- 3213 CLERKS REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE**
- An email from SSDC was received:  
*‘Officers in the South Somerset District Council Strategic Planning Team have been working hard over the last few months to update the Council’s Five-Year Housing Land Supply. They have now completed the assessment for the period 2020-2025 and are very pleased to inform you that calculations show that South Somerset District Council now has a supply equivalent to 6 years. You can see the full report and schedule [here](#) - please scroll down the page and click on the tab which states: Housing (including Five-Year Housing Land Supply).*  
  
*This is fantastic news for the Council and means that the tilted balance towards the presumption in favour of sustainable development will no longer apply in respect of the lack of a five year land supply. However, going forward the Council must continue to try and maintain this positive position. Over the coming year officers involved in the Accelerating Housing Delivery Programme will be working with developers and agents operating locally to help facilitate the delivery of new homes in Yeovil and our Market Towns, this will be a positive step towards helping to ensure that we continue to meet the government’s Housing Delivery Test going forward.’*
  - Please see **Appendix 2** for a further update from SSDC.
- 3214 ANY OTHER MATTERS RAISED WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIRMAN**
- Clerk to request Police attends the next meeting.
- 3215 DATE OF NEXT BI-MONTHLY MEETING:** Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 6.30 pm

## **APPENDIX 1 - ILMINSTER DIVISION COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2020**

### **FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Both the One Somerset case, submitted by SCC, and the Stronger Somerset bid submitted by the four district councils have now been sent to the Secretary of State. We await further developments. Parish and town councils have been invited to attend a series of virtual meetings to consider the two proposals.

### **COVID-19 UPDATE**

SSDC still considers that in-person Council meetings are inappropriate at the present time and that virtual meetings are a satisfactory substitute. Parish and town councils should continue to check guidance published by NALC or SALC. The current view is that although the Principal Regulations continue to permit local councils to hold meetings (an exemption to the rule of 6 limit) in COVID-19 secure premises, NALC recommends that councils continue to meet remotely.

SSDC's finances continue to be impacted, with loss of income and increased expenditure despite grants from the Government.

SSDC have successfully paid out the total allocation of discretionary grants to businesses. 205 businesses have benefitted at a value of £1,928,000. Awards to 3,122 businesses were granted, totalling £36.7m.

SSDC's Environmental Health team continue to meet with Public Health and the other districts in Somerset to monitor local infection data and review control measures, with an emphasis on identifying risk areas and containing infection rates.

There has been a 100% increase in noise complaints.

### **SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL**

I have been appointed to the Officer Appeals Panel.

### **SW COUNCILS EMPLOYERS PANEL**

At this month's meeting I was re-appointed to the position of Vice Chair. The 2.75% pay offer to local government workers was discussed and concern raised over the challenges for the ability of employees to take their full annual leave entitlement due to the disruption caused by the pandemic. Staff continue to be encouraged to work from home where possible.

Consultation is now live, seeking views on proposals for reforming exit payment terms for local government workers; redundancy severance payments are to be limited to a max. of 66 weeks (down from 144 weeks) and capped at £87,000. Changes for options to pension arrangements are also part of the consultation, along with protection for zero hours contracts.

### **POLICE**

The police were granted extra powers from 28th Aug. to fine organisers of illegal gatherings of more than 30 people up to £10,000. Those who attend gatherings, and those who do not wear face coverings where it is mandatory, can be given a £100 fine, which will double on each offence up to £3,200. Since the easing of lockdown, normal levels of demand have resumed. In August, 90,000 calls were received, with almost 60,000 via the 101 non-emergency line. Of these non-emergency calls, 399 were directly related to COVID-19 breaches.

Within the 399 calls, there were 149 calls reporting suspected raves or unlicensed music events. The police responded to 101 of these incidents. Of those not attended, most were either not in our force area or cross referenced to another incident.

International travel return and quarantine - The National Triage Centre was set up to provide a central hub to identify people returning from trips abroad and distribute details of individuals to local police forces to dip sample compliance for quarantine on their return.

Neighbourhood Teams took part in a week of action to increase awareness and disrupt County Lines, including:

A search warrant at a premises in Yeovil with drugs, money and phones seized

Working with British Transport Police on trains between towns to identify young or vulnerable people who may be susceptible to being exploited

Visited over 100 places of work, schools and businesses to raise awareness of County Lines

Identified those at risk of being targeted, those exploited before, visiting them with partner agencies to make sure safeguarding was in place

A bid for Government Surge Funding aimed at helping to tackle Serious Violence, was successful, enabling additional pro-active activity in obtaining more civil orders and injunctions on those causing most harm.

### **INDEPENDENT ADVISORY GROUP**

Avon & Somerset Constabulary are proposing to deploy 5 mobile fingerprinting devices to give officers the ability to take the fingerprints of individuals reasonably suspected of having committed an offence, or attempting to commit one, and where the name of the person is unknown, or cannot readily be ascertained. A positive return will provide identity information to the officer to make an informed decision on the course of action to take. Confirming identity at the scene may negate the need to arrest the person and take them to a police station to ascertain their identity.

There has been some drug related activity reported in Chard, in part related to youth activities. County lines remains a concern, and a number of successful operations in Yeovil have resulted in the disruption of such activity.

Beat Manager Lisa Hallett has now left. A new beat manager will be starting in Oct.

A national campaign has just begun to recruit more police officers.

The Police and Crime Commissioner is conducting a survey of public opinion on police and crime services in the area.

Please complete the survey via this link:

[https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/news/2020/09/do-you-have-thoughts-on-your-local-police-service/?utm\\_source=john&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=opcc-covid-survey](https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/news/2020/09/do-you-have-thoughts-on-your-local-police-service/?utm_source=john&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=opcc-covid-survey)

### **GYPSY/TRAVELLER UPDATE**

The Outreach Team have been busy with rough sleepers, which have shown an increase. The lack of authorised gypsy/traveller sites in the county remains a challenge.

Whilst restrictions imposed by the pandemic continue it has been recommended to:

Cease Enforcement Action where an unauthorised encampment is in a safe space.

Provide Sanitation and Water facilities where an unauthorised encampment is being tolerated, and it is safe to do so, to reduce the chance of infection.

Provide a temporary transit site in each District. South Somerset feels that it can manage any encampments in place rather than have a dedicated site. These provisions are intended to provide facilities and services, giving a secure space for a travelling family to stop if one of them is displaying symptoms or suffering with COVID-19, and provides a safe space to enforce if needed.

Over some years local authorities have been granted funds for the gypsy/traveller community. In South Somerset, whilst funds have been used, there is a balance available of approx. £120,000.

### **YEOVIL HOSPITAL**

A update was received by CEO Jonathan Higman this month. In the last 12 months there were 42k admissions, of which 6k were to A&E, where 97% of patients were seen within 4 hours; the best record in the country. The hospital currently has 2,300 employees and in their last CQC inspection received a good overall rating (outstanding for emergency response).

The main focus of international recruitment is the Philippines and Dubai.

A recent staff survey received a 72% response rate, the highest in the country.

Expenditure this year has reached £200m., including Covid-19 related costs.

### **HIGHWAYS - ILMINSTER TRAFFIC CONCERNS**

There is a new process for setting up Speedwatch in the area. Previously a Road Traffic police officer would carry out the assessments and training. This role has now been transferred to local Beat Teams, who are still waiting for full clarification and training. Elaine Costanza at Yeovil police station is the contact person for those interested.

[Elaine.Costanza@avonandsomerset.police.uk](mailto:Elaine.Costanza@avonandsomerset.police.uk)

Having been made aware of two incidents in Ilminster I contacted our local PCSO, and received this response: 'I am aware of the two incidents you mention in Ilminster and am obviously concerned whenever any incidents occur. I have looked into both of these mentioned incidents and can report that neither of these incidents were speed related.'

1. a driver reversing. who did not see the person walk behind, and they didn't see them reversing.

2. someone pulling out at a junction and someone crossing the road, one not seeing the other.'

In relation to concerns raised over 20mph zones in Ilminster, a mobile camera unit has been requested (mainly for North Street) to monitor speed levels as traffic enters the town.

As Ilminster has an active Fire and Ambulance service it is likely that traffic calming measures would not be put in place. It has been suggested that residents contact the Town Council to take matters further. Along New Road, it is considered that the volume of traffic would prevent vehicles travelling at over 30mph. There is no weight limit for New Road, the 7.5 tonne limit is just for High Street to the old Police Station. Tractors going about agricultural duties do not come under weight limits. It is felt that although farm traffic is an inconvenience, unfortunately it is part of rural life.

The issue of designated resident parking at Orchard Vale is ongoing and remains unresolved. Yarlington are planning to replace a sign previously been sited adjacent to their properties.

A fatal traffic accident occurred this month on the former A303 east of Whitelackington village near the entrance to the Dillington Farms and Estate. In response, there has been renewed interest in the introduction of a 30 mph speed limit, which in this case may have helped to avoid a fatality. Currently the standard 60 mph applies and the advisory 30 mph speed limit, is largely ignored.

#### **SSDC FULL COUNCIL**

At this month's full council meeting a majority decision was reached to support the Stronger Somerset business case put forward by the four districts.

#### **SSDC AREA WEST**

Agenda items this month largely related to planning applications and appeals related to other communities within Area West.

Broadway & Horton Cricket Club were awarded a community grant of £4,567 towards the purchase of new nets.

#### **SOMERSET CLIMATE EMERGENCY COMMUNITY FUND**

£1m. of SCC funding was made available earlier this year for town and parish councils to support local communities. A new grant scheme is now available. From Oct. you are invited to bid for between £5k and £75k for projects to reduce carbon emissions. Applications do need to be submitted via parish or town councils.

To find out more go to [www.somerset.gov.uk/climate-emergency](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/climate-emergency)

#### **FROG LANE**

Several local residents have been in contact with me in relation to the overgrown footpath. It is proving difficult to establish ownership so that action can be taken.

#### **ILMINSTER/CREWKERNE SCHOOL REVIEW**

The appointment of officer Amanda Walker has meant that there has been some progress in relation to the future of education in the two towns. An announcement is expected to in early Oct.

#### **DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**

I have been part of an independent review of the authority's governance arrangements that is being carried out by the Centre for Governance & Scrutiny (CfGS).

The lack of readily available COVID-19 testing for firefighters is of concern in relation to pits potential impact on officer availability.

This month I took advantage of the free Home Safety visits offered by the service and would strongly recommend all residents to do so. Call 0800 05 02 999 or email [firekills@dsfire.gov.uk](mailto:firekills@dsfire.gov.uk)

**COMMUNITIES HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT – Planning White Paper**

Several online meetings have been held with the Minister for CHLG, Robert Jenrick, this month.

My notes ..... It is thought that there is a strong case for unitary authorities from the perspective of housing delivery, although this could be achieved by local authorities having joint plans.

Protecting and enhancing green belt designated land is felt to override housing need.

There seems to be broad support for introducing an infrastructure levy centrally, but allowing local authorities to collect and allocate how it is spent. Concern has been raised over regional disparities and considering is being given to area weighting.

Growth areas are expected to largely correspond with existing allocated sites of some size.

Local housing need is being updated but the proposal is not intended to be binding; more of a starting point for discussion to allow time for new planning reforms to come into play.

It is important to strike a balance between urban development and 'levelling up' with rural demand.

Any local government reform must have 'broad local support'.

The Planning for the Future consultation [planningforthefuture@communities.gov.uk](mailto:planningforthefuture@communities.gov.uk) which closes at 11:45pm on 29 October 2020 provides local residents with the opportunity to participate and express their views.

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/MHCLG-Planning-for-the-Future/>

Feedback suggests that the questions are lengthy and complex, where even professionals have struggled to respond.



**SSDC PLANNING**

There is now an increased focus on enforcement and conservation, and a training video is planned to support town and parish councils in being able to respond appropriately when consulted on planning applications. Report templates are also being produced, with the aim of achieving greater levels of consistency.

The total number of planning applications received is 44% down on the same period in 2019. Enforcement cases rose by 28% compared to 2019. Since the introduction of the new system that is being put into place, there have been 17 enforcement cases reported in Area West.

Fee income is down by 36% on the same period last year.

Backlogs are increasing but are comparable to last year; turnover of staff has affected efficiency.

West Area: 25 10. Of the 57 appeals submitted 14 were allowed. The number of cases that were determined by Committee and subsequently appealed is six (2 in East, 2 in West, 2 in North). Of those six Committee decisions appealed five were allowed. 11. Requests for costs were made alongside 4 of the 6 Committee-related appeals.

Three of these were granted, either partially or fully. No request for an award of costs were submitted with appeals following delegated refusals.

The application for 8 dwellings at Paulls Lane, Broadway was dismissed on appeal.

A number of parishes have recently been in contact with me in relation to concerns over breaches of planning conditions. To report this, use the following link: <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/services/planning/report-a-planning-breach-and-planning-enforcement/>

### SSDC 2020/2021 FIRST QUARTERLY REPORT - PLANNING

Measure (frequency of reporting)	Description	Target 20/21	Q1 20/21	Q2 (19/20)	Q3 (19/20)	Q4 (19/20)	Perf against target	Direction of travel	Supporting information
Speed of processing – planning applications – major (Quarterly)	The % of valid major planning applications determined within 13 weeks	60%	93.75%	89%	76.9%	100%			Major applications can be considered determined 'in time' if they are determined within 13 weeks. If beyond the 13 week period there must be a signed extension of time (EoT).
Speed of processing – planning applications – minor (Quarterly)	The % of valid minor planning applications determined within 8 weeks	70%	95.03%	90%	92%	94%			Minor applications can be considered determined 'in time' if they are determined within 8 weeks. If beyond 8 weeks there must be a signed extension of time (EoT).
Speed of processing – planning applications – other (Quarterly)	The % of all valid other planning applications determined within 8 weeks	80%	96.86%	96%	96%	96%			Applications can be considered determined 'in time' if they are determined within 8 weeks or if beyond 8 weeks with a signed extension of time (EoT).
Planning appeals lost as a % of all decisions (Quarterly)	The number of appeals to the Planning Inspector lost (i.e. decision overturned) expressed as a % of all decisions	10% (max threshold)	3.39%	2.00%	0.88%	0.83%			

### ILMINSTER LIBRARY

Ilminster library will be opening for browsing from Tues. 6<sup>th</sup> Oct. Current opening hours are:-

Monday closed

Tuesday 10.00 – 4.00

Wednesday 10.00 – 12.00

Thursday closed

Friday 10.00 – 4.00

Alternate Saturdays 10.00 – 12.00

The number of people allowed into the library at any one time is limited to 5 to ensure social distancing. The service has now expanded to enable customers to choose their own books.

“library choice” is still offered for customers who would like library staff to select books, taking books and DVD’s on their behalf. The Royal Voluntary Service continues to provide home delivery for those who are housebound, have caring responsibilities or isolating due to Covid-19.

### BROADBAND

Given our new ways of working, which often involve working from home, the provision of reliable Broadband access remains a challenge for many smaller rural communities in this area.

Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) launched a new procurement process to contract services for the building of full-fibre networks across Devon and Somerset in February and expect to have the contract(s) awarded by December 2020. Once this procurement has completed, we will have a much better idea of precisely which premises are due to benefit in the roll out build. More information can be found at [www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk/category/news/](http://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk/category/news/)

In the meantime, properties within Somerset may be eligible for other schemes, notably the Gigabit Voucher Scheme. This scheme is available to residents and businesses in rural areas to enable them to work with suppliers to fund gigabit broadband for whole communities. Projects need to be of two or more residents/small businesses and have current speeds of less than 100mbps. Vouchers for residential premises are between £500 - £1,500, while SME’s can be up to £3,500. Full eligibility and terms can be found at <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/rural/>

Within the website, there is a post code checker with allows residents and businesses to check if their post code area is currently eligible for vouchers. The search result will not only say where an area is eligible but will also show which suppliers are active in that area.



The Community Challenge Programme is an initiative by CDS that could be used to provide support to communities who choose to go down the voucher route. If communities choose this solution, CDS would be able to provide more information and support at that time.

**Summary for South Somerset**

Total premises: **84,700** (*the number of homes or businesses in the area*)

CDS superfast achieved: **49,900**

CDS superfast planned: **315**

Commercial superfast achieved: **23,844**

Commercial planned: **1,280**

Total delivered or planned: **75,339**

Remaining: **9,361** - CDS is seeking to cover as many remaining premises as possible through a new £38 million programme and supported by £18.7 million of Government funding

Take-up of CDS funded broadband services is nearly 70% compared with a national average of 61.4%, an increase of circa 5% over the last quarter.

## ACTIVITIES/MEETINGS

1/9	SSDC Scrutiny
1/9	Broadway PC
2/9	SSDC planning reform workshop
2/9	SSDC Area South meeting
2/9	Horton quiz
3/9	SSDC District Exec.
4/9	DSFRS Member Forum
4/9	Fiveways School Staffing committee
6/9	Horton service
6/9	Horton prayers
7/9	Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 briefing
7/9	Ashill PC
8/9	SSDC Scrutiny
8/9	ILF AGM
8/9	SSDC Licensing
9/9	SSDC Area East
10/9	SSDC DX
10/9	SSDC full council
14/9	Museums of Somerset meeting
14/9	Dept. for Communities Housing and Local Government meeting
14/9	Donyatt PC
15/9	Ilminster TC
16/9	Police Independent Advisory Group
16/9	Broadway planning meeting
16/9	SSDC Area West
18/9	SW Employers Panel
18/9	SW Employers Council
20/9	Horton service
21/9	Horton prayers
21/9	Neroche school governor meeting
21/9	Horton PC
22/9	Chaffcombe PC
22/9	Ilminster Lit Fest Ops meeting
23/9	DSFRA Home Safety meeting
23/9	Horton quiz
24/9	Isle Valley Benefice virtual coffee
24/9	Fiveways school governor meeting
25/9	DSFRA CFO appraisal
27/9	Horton service
28/9	SCC Officer Appeals Panel
29/9	1-to-1 with SSDC CEO
29/9	SSDC Scrutiny
29/9	PCSO familiarisation event
30/9	Horton quiz

**DISTRICT/COUNTY COUNCILLOR MONTHLY REPORT OCTOBER 2020**

Apologies in advance for any errors or omissions. It has been an 'interesting' month.

**Useful numbers**

Covid-19 emergency helpline 0300 790 6275

SCC Contact centre – 0300 123 2224

**UNITARY BID**

The official invitation from Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State at MHCLG to submit a business case for a Unitary Authority in Somerset has now been received. Both the One Somerset business case and the Stronger Somerset case have been written, although both are under review to identify what further work is required in relation to consultation and engagement with partners. In addition to SCC and the four districts, B&NES and North Somerset have also been asked if they wish to participate and submit; early indications are that they will not choose to do so. All authorities have until 9th of Nov. to respond. More info. on both bids can be found at

[www.onesomerset.org.uk](http://www.onesomerset.org.uk) and also [www.strongersomerset.co.uk](http://www.strongersomerset.co.uk)

**SCC FINANCE**

Director of Finance Jason Vaughan has confirmed that following a recent external audit of SCC's finances, an unqualified report was issued, reflecting that the financial statements provided were considered to be fair and transparent in compliance.

The government have announced a scheme to cover some loss of income due to Covid-19, being claimed on a monthly basis from Sept. onwards. It is estimated that £3.5m of grant can be claimed from MHCLG through this scheme. When taking this grant into account, together with the unallocated corporate contingency balance of £0.771m, the predicted end of year position is a favourable variance of £0.683m.

**DILLINGTON**

Dillington House is forecasted to be £1.330m overspent at year-end based on current forecasts and is mainly attributable to the impact of Covid-19.

Dillington has been closed for business since the end of March 2020 to ensure compliance. Although some activities have now started up again complying with Government Covid-19 guidance will have a significant impact on estimated income levels, being much lower than budgeted. This is particularly the case for conferences and weddings, currently limited to 30 guests. Savings on staff costs, food, bar supplies, laundry and supplies and services continue to be made where possible and have been factored into the forecast.

**SCC SCRUTINY PEOPLE AND PLACE****RIGHTS OF WAY**

During a presentation this month from RoW Service Manager Pete Holey, it was mentioned that the public believe that the definitive map is incorrect. Officers are liaising with Districts to ensure that the map is checked. Meetings with Bridleway Assocs. are being held annually, and more frequently if needed. Volunteers are wanted to adopt footpaths.

**Application backlog update**

June 2019 – c. 330 undetermined applications

October 2020 – 362 undetermined applications

	Applications received	Applications determined
2018	9	9
2019	17	8
2020 so far	31	10 (potentially 17)

## **CLIMATE EMERGENCY STRATEGY**

Response to recent surveys indicate that the key issues identified so far are broadly in line with public concerns.

**Focus of the Strategy**, goals and outcomes –

- 1 – To decarbonise Local Authorities and public sector estates, to reduce carbon footprint
- 2 – To work towards making Somerset a Carbon Neutral County by 2030
- 3 – To prepare Somerset’s resilience to the impact of Climate Change

**Sector Themes** – Energy, Transport, Built Environment, Business, Industry & Supply Chains, Natural Environment, Farming & Food, Water, Waste & Resources, Communications

**Action plans, future funding and delivery**

- Initial high-level plans have been developed
- Identify actions to begin the journey towards carbon neutrality
- Cost known actions, identify lead organisations and set timescales for delivery
- Work on understanding other significant actions in more detail, and define costs
- Carry out detailed feasibility studies to identify project funding
- Prioritise actions and secure funding for delivery
- Propose delivery governance arrangements to Somerset Leader/Chief Exec. group

## **DISPOSAL OF COUNTY FARMS**

SCC officer Charlie Field has provided this update. Parshalls Farm House is on the market with some good interest shown. SCC intend to pursue some planning applications for the farm buildings at this site and have agreed terms with the carnival club so that they remain on site for another year till their new “home” is built. SCC will let the majority of the farmland. The proposed sale of the site at Dollings Pool Dairy progresses.

The tenant at Coldharbour has moved out, and we have applied for planning permission on the farm buildings.

## **POLICE – RURAL CRIME**

As part of regular focused activity, neighbourhood teams in South Somerset and the Mendips took part in a proactive operation targeting Rural Crime offenders, providing reassurance to farming and local communities. This involved dozens of Police staff, including those from Dorset and Wiltshire, who patrolled 100s of miles, stopped dozens of vehicles and visited farms and communities across the area. The highlights;

Vehicle stopped in Chard for no insurance.

Driver wanted on a European arrest warrant and was detained, his vehicle was seized.

At least 2 other vehicles stopped with no insurance, and seized.

2 males who had been in our area were arrested for theft from motor vehicle

Prompt reaction to reports of suspicious activity on a farm.

Male found with drugs parked up in a layby.

The strategy of the 4Es approach - engage, explain, encourage and enforce - has served the communities of Avon and Somerset well, striking the balance between education and enforcement. Although moving faster from encouragement to enforcement to reflect on gravity of the health situation, to date only 388 fixed penalty notices have been issued.

## **COVID-19 UPDATE**

There has been an increase in Somerset cases during the last few weeks. Regular updates have been distributed as I have been in receipt of them.

## **SSDC FC**

At this month’s meeting I was appointed to the Scrutiny Committee

After much debate two motions were passed; one in relation to the prevention of badger culling on SSDC owned or managed land, and also, ahead of a member’s briefing, concerns expressed over the recent planning white paper issued by the Secretary of State for MHCLG.

## **PHOSPHATES**

This is an emerging picture. Phosphate levels are too high, which is damaging the ecology in the Somerset Levels and Moors RAMSAR site. As a result, SSDC is unable to approve any new development in the catchment for the Levels until a mitigation strategy is agreed. The development affected is anything with wastewater such as residential, commercial and tourist development, or agricultural development that increases the herd size, and therefore increases the phosphate output of the site. The catchment is across most of the district, and many applications are on hold as a result as SSDC are not issuing decisions that are going to result in an impact on phosphates (leading from wastewater) within the catchment.

The Councils of Somerset met this month and are obtaining a tender invitation with a view to producing a Somerset Nutrients Strategy

SSDC will be writing to all agents about this once wording is agreed.

SSDC are not refusing anything on the basis of impact on phosphate levels at present but a large number of applications are on hold at the moment until the situation becomes clear.

<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/planning/phosphates-on-the-somerset-levels-and-moors/>

## **SW AMBULANCE SERVICE**

In response to an enquiry from a local resident I have received the following: We have no plans to close Ilminster Ambulance Station. From January 2021 we will realign our operational resource levels from the station as part of Our People Plan to increase conveying by double crewed ambulances (DCAs).

This is being delivered through new investment and transferring our current single crewed Rapid Response Vehicles (RRVs) into new DCAs, which is in line with our regional and national ARP (response standards) plans to both improve our initial response to patients and to ensure those who require immediate conveyance to hospital receive an appropriate DCA resource as quickly as possible.

These changes will see the current RRVs based at Ilminster redeployed into additional DCA hours across Somerset, which will not only benefit the local community in Ilminster but our wider population across the county.

## **CHRISTMAS TREES**

Unfortunately SSDC are unable to offer the service this year as workload will not allow for staff shortages or wood chippers due to the loss of production during Covid-19 lockdown.

Where possible, SWP and SSDC would like to encourage people to consider replanting trees, home composting or adding them to a corner of the garden as a wild habitat. Where that's not possible, anyone subscribing to the SWP Garden Waste Service can leave their tree out next to their garden waste bin for collection. The usual restrictions apply – branches should be less than 15cm or less in width. Anyone not subscribing to the service can take trees to any of the county's 16 recycling sites <https://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/recycling/centres/> for the garden waste skips. Other collection points may be available, and in due course these will be publicised.

## **SOMERSET WASTE PARTNERSHIP**

All 16 Somerset recycling sites are now on winter timetables: weekday sites operate 9am-5pm, weekends 9am to 4pm. For details, go to [www.somersetwaste.gov.uk](http://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk)

To manage essential tasks, without the need for emails and phone calls, residents and businesses can now access the pull-down menu at [www.somersetwaste.gov.uk](http://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk) to check collection dates, order free recycling boxes, Bright Blue Bags, food waste bins and kitchen caddies, arrange paid-for bulky waste collections, buy garden waste sacks and request garden sack collections, and report any missed collections after 7pm on the due day.

Composting bins are currently on offer - 220-litre for £10 and 330L for £12.50, in addition to a buy-one-get-one-half-price deal for two of the same size. Delivery is £9.99 per order but this can be combined with a neighbour or friend.

Go to [www.getcomposting.com](http://www.getcomposting.com)

Clothes recycling - clothes and shoes good enough to be worn again can be put out in kerbside collections, tied in a bag (not black sacks) to keep completely dry. No textiles, such as bedding, will be taken.

## **HIGHWAYS MATTERS**

### **ILMINSTER TC**

Agreement has been reached not to remove 2 parking spaces along Silver Street after consultation with businesses in the town.

## **BROADWAY**

Once again there have been concerns about speeding. Highways has responded with: 'Although we understand and appreciate residents' concerns about vehicle speeds and road safety unfortunately there is no easy solution. There is already a speed restriction in place in Broadway, it is therefore a police matter to enforce this. The 30mph signage is correct throughout village as per Department for Transport criteria.

The other option maybe a SID (speed indicator device). We are happy to work with local councils to help them use their own devices. There are legal responsibilities, and a duty of care to road users and installers, which come with the placing of SIDs on the highway and therefore this cannot be a casual arrangement. There are also risks involved with working near busy roads where the speed of traffic is a concern, therefore SCC needs to help safely manage such work on the highway.

Any new SID requests must have the support of the parish council and County Councillor and be funded by them (the PC, not me!).

I will pass your comments regarding the use of Broadway Road as part of the diversion route to my colleagues in Street Works.

## **HORTON PLAYING FIELD PROJECT**

The application for an SSDC community will be discussed at the Nov. Area West meeting.

## **FIVEWAYS SCHOOL**

I have now been appointed as the Training and Equal Opportunities Governor.

## **SSDC NEW PLANNING VALIDATION GUIDE**

This has been in place now for over 3 months. Feedback is being addressed and at present it is felt that requirements are too onerous for normal applications.

## **SSDC PLANNING REFORM**

Key points agreed by the working group.

- All Information to be sent digitally in future.
- Town and parish councils to respond within 21 days.
- Increase in enforcement activity.

Following a number of requests for information, the following update was received: SSDC recently went out to permanent recruitment for a Lead Specialist but did not secure a suitable candidate. Barry James has agreed to remain in post in the Interim role for the next few months. Performance figures show a reasonably positive picture, but the Planning Service is where it should be. Many of the benefits of Transformation have yet to be embedded in the Planning Service. SSDC are determined to ensure we have a Planning Service able to deal with some of the challenges that remain, including backlogs, modernised systems, improved technology and excellent customer service. After discussion with the Chief Executive and other Directors as Project Team has been put in place, to resolve the issues, improve the quality of the service, and move forward in a different way. This includes the timeliness of applications and breaches.

There have been some recent resignations from the team, and plans are in place to ensure that all staff have a challenging but do-able case load, and receive the support they need to deliver excellent services.

The Project has 4 work streams and work has been done with the Service Delivery Leadership team to re-task some individuals to support this work.

Project Manager, Kirsty Larkins is aware of the issues faced and is also continuing in her part time role as the Director for Strategy & Commissioning.

Technical Planning Lead, Barry James will be working with the Project Team, as the most senior Planner and continue to finish off the Planning Reimagined Workshops, and implement the changes needed.

People Lead, Sharon Jones will take over line management of all the staff in the Planning service to provide consistency.

Change Lead, Jan Gamon, will work on leading change, as there are a number of procedures and processes that need work to ensure the most efficient and effective Performance/Chair of the Project Team Meetings, Netta Meadows will also join the Project Team, leading on Performance monitoring.

SSDC will also be engaging short term additional Planners, to assist with the workload and fill the gaps whilst they recruit 3 Permanent vacancies, following some recent departures, and appoint a permanent replacement to the Lead Specialist role in the New Year.

### **CYCLE TO SCHOOL INITIATIVE**

A £2 million initiative has been announced to help more children to cycle or walk as part of their commute to the classroom. The funding is part of a wider plan to create safer streets for cycling and walking and to encourage more people to choose active travel.

An in-school cycle repair scheme is to be set up in primary schools and local neighbourhoods to ensure children's bikes are fit for the road.

'Doctor Bike' clinics will be rolled out, targeting areas where children, including those with disabilities, are likely to need support to get bikes roadworthy for regular school run use.

A further £1 million has also been announced to boost the number of children walking to school. The Walk to School Outreach Programme is being extended to roll out further measures to support walking.

Bikeability training has also recently restarted in schools, helping children gain confidence and boost their cycling skills.

## ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

1/10	SSDC District Exec.
1/10	Isle Valley Benefice coffee morning
4/10	Horton service
6/10	SSDC planning reform
6/10	Ilminster TC highways committee
6/10	Broadway PC
7/10	Meeting re: Ilminster/Crewkerne schools
7/10	Winsham PC
12/10	Horton prayers
12/10	DSFRA Resources committee meeting
13/10	Fiveways School Staffing Committee
13/10	Governor Services Head Teacher Performance Appraisal training
14/10	SSDC Area East
14/10	SCC Scrutiny Policies & Place
14/10	DSFRA Resources Committee
15/10	DSFRA Member forum
14/10	Horton quiz
15/10	Licensing in the Covid Era training
15/10	SSDC FC
16/10	Interview and Recruitment Techniques Training
16/10	Unconscious Bias Management Training
16/10	Listening and Questioning Skills Training
18/10	Horton service
19/10	Horton prayers
19/10	Museums of Somerset AGM
19/10	SSDC Planning White Paper briefing
19/10	Neroche School governor meeting
20/10	SSDC CEO meeting
20/10	Governor School Complaints Training
21/10	SCC Cabinet meeting – Future
21/10	SSDC Planning re-imagined working group
21/10	DSFRA HR Committee
21/10	Horton quiz
22/10	SSDC Audit Committee
22/10	Isle Valley Virtual Coffee morning
22/10	SSDC Circular Economy webinar
23/10	DSFRA Board meeting
24/10	Climate Emergency
25/10	Somerset & Avon Police intervention
27/10	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service meeting
28/10	Horton Quiz
29/10	Isle Valley Coffee morning
30/10	Samaritans Recruitment Training
30/10	CAMHS Outreach enhanced support meeting





South Somerset  
District Council

## Briefing to Town & Parish Councils

November 2020

This briefing gives Parish and Town Councils an update on a key planning issue regarding Phosphates.

Many of you will have heard, and read information about the phosphate issue, following a letter South Somerset District Council received from Natural England. I understand there is a lot of misunderstanding and confusion about the official position regarding this. Therefore we have developed some information, outlined below, to bring you up to speed on this issue.

### Somerset Levels & Moors Overview

The Somerset Levels and Moors are designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the Habitats Regulations 2017<sup>1</sup> and listed as a Ramsar Site under the Ramsar Convention. The Ramsar Site consists of a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within what is the largest area of lowland wet grassland and wetland habitat remaining in Britain, within the flood plains of the Rivers Axe, Brue, Parrett, Tone and their tributaries. The site attracts internationally important numbers of wildlife, including wildfowl, aquatic invertebrates, and is an important site for breeding waders.

### Natural England Advice

The Council received a letter from Natural England to inform us of the high levels of phosphates in the Somerset Levels and Moors that are causing the interest features of the Ramsar Site to be unfavourable, or at risk, from the effects of these high levels. The same letter has also been sent to the other Local Planning Authorities in Somerset. This is as a result of a Court Judgement known as the *Dutch N* case, which has seen a greater scrutiny of plans or projects by Natural England, regarding increased nutrient loads that may have a significant effect on sites designated under the Habitats Regulations 2017 (including Ramsar Sites). The letter from Natural England provides updated advice to guide the approach to future development within the Ramsar Site catchment.

As can be seen on the map below, a significant area of South Somerset falls within the catchment.

It is considered by Natural England that although improvements to the Sewage Treatment Works, along with more minor measures to tackle agricultural pollution, have been secured these will not reduce phosphate levels sufficiently to restore the condition of the Ramsar Site. Therefore, the scope for permitting further development that would increase phosphates either directly or indirectly to the site is limited. This means that before determining certain planning application/submissions that may give rise to additional phosphates within the catchment, competent authorities (i.e. the local planning authority) should undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), proceeding to an Appropriate Assessment

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<sup>1</sup> The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

(AA) where a likely significant effect cannot be ruled out. It is not acceptable to impose a condition on a planning permission; this has to be addressed prior to determination.

Certain types of development will therefore require an AA, this includes those that will result in a net increase in population served by a wastewater system, or increased nutrient loading from agriculture. Existing detailed planning consents are not affected by this situation and can be built out subject to suitable discharge of pre-commencement and other relevant conditions.

The following bullet points set out the development proposals that are impacted and will likely need to undertake an Appropriate Assessment before the can proceed to a decision. This impacts upon all live applications that have not been determined. We are taking legal advice to clarify further the situation with reserved matters and S.73 applications.

The types of development proposals caught by this situation are as follows:

- **New residential units** – all applications for dwellings, including tourist accommodation, gypsy sites /pitches. This will even apply to single dwelling units and possible annexes.
- **Commercial developments** – new commercial floorspace that results in an increase in employees and/or to a use that would impact on wastewater – and tourism attractions.
- **Agricultural Development** – additional barns, slurry stores etc. where it is likely to lead to an increase in livestock.
- **Prior Notifications** of agricultural development where, as a result of the development, it will lead to an increase in livestock. Also, prior notifications for change of use of office to dwellings and agricultural buildings to dwellings
- **Anaerobic Digesters** that are reliant on farmyard manure and arable crops which are significant contributors to elevated phosphate levels in the catchment – particularly the production of maize.
- **Possibly tourism attractions/developments** that attract people to the district and generates additional wastewater.

Wessex Water's approach to phosphorus reduction in the Somerset catchments is set out in their Business Plan 2020-2025, specifically advocating a Catchment Nutrient Balancing Approach within the Tone, Axe/Brue and Parrett sub catchments. This approach has been accepted by the Environment Agency and Natural England. More details can be found here: <https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/corporate/strategy-and-reports/business-plan-2020>.

Natural England has advised that the AA should consider the improvements to Wessex Water's sewage treatment works. Once up and running these improvements will significantly reduce (although not remove) the offsetting requirements for new

residential development in perpetuity. However, additional and temporary measures may be required to take account of the increased nutrient loads in the interim period.

Wessex Water has confirmed a planned investment of £150M in the Tone, Parrett, and Brue/Axe catchments including a number of initiatives to impact this positively as soon as possible.

#### **Immediate Impacts**

You may already be aware that decisions on certain planning applications have been delayed due to the need for ecological advice as a result of the development being likely to give rise to an appreciable effect on this issue.

It is inevitable that such delays will arise over the coming months whilst the Somerset Ecology Service deals with an increasing and more demanding work load to undertake HRAs for residential applications (and other affected development) on behalf of the Somerset Local Planning Authorities and receive further guidance from Natural England. We are working with the Somerset Ecology Service to find a solution as quickly as possible.

Although we have a high number of existing residential commitments that can continue to be built out, we need to ensure that future supply of housing is maintained going forward to meet the needs of our communities. We are working closely with developers to accelerate growth, including on committed sites that have stalled. However, we need to recognise that this issue will impact on all new residential schemes coming forward, from single dwellings to large-scale major sites within the catchment area over the shorter term, whilst actions are undertaken to address mitigation measures.

It is possible that some sites, particularly those that are greenfield and have wider landownership options, may be able to achieve nutrient neutrality if they can demonstrate that sufficient measures have been taken to offset phosphate outputs (e.g. by taking land out of agricultural production for a minimum of 80 years). Natural England, working with the Somerset Ecology Service and local planning authorities, are hoping to develop a framework to enable some short-term/interim solutions particularly for smaller scale developments.

Planning staff across Somerset are meeting regularly to discuss issues and seek further understanding on the phosphate issue. Natural England has indicated that where outline permission has already been granted, the reserved matters application will need to be subject to HRA and AA.

#### **Next Steps**

We are working together with the other Councils across Somerset to jointly develop a Somerset-wide Nutrient/Water Quality Strategy. An invitation to tender has been drafted to commission consultants to undertake the strategy on behalf of the local planning authorities and to do this at pace. This strategy is needed to fully understand the water quality issues and baseline phosphorus inputs, establish nutrient budgets for

current and future housing growth, and develop mitigation initiatives to offset phosphate pollution to enable residential and other phosphate emitting development to be determined in a way that is nutrient neutral.

We recognise the significance of this work and the sense of urgency needed to take this forward to be able to unlock growth. For us this is not only important for the timely determination of planning applications, but also to ensure the Local Plan Review preferred site allocations can be taken forward with appropriate policy measures in place.

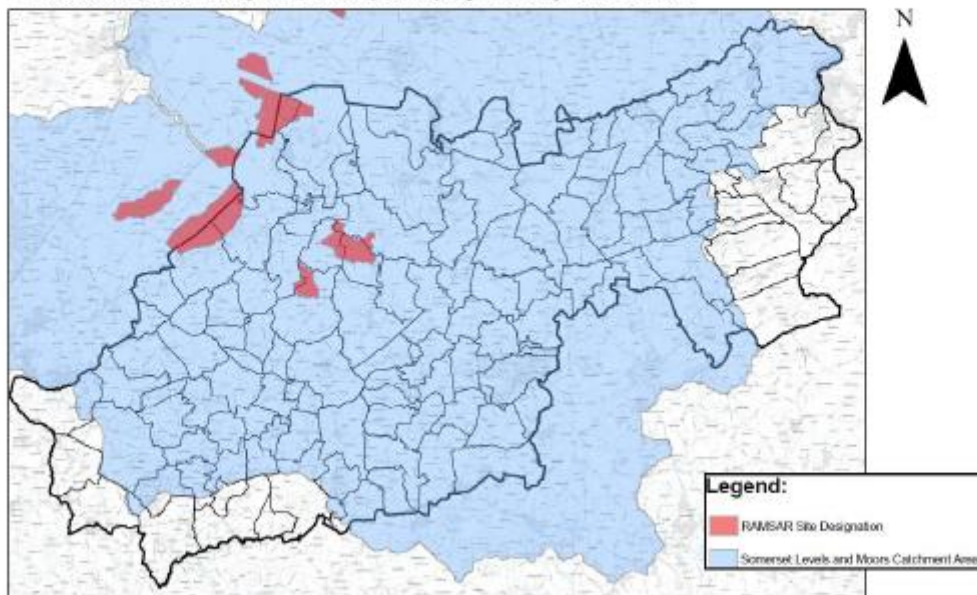
It is recognised by Natural England that an interim approach needs to include the ability for applicants to provide their own bespoke solutions in the short term. However, not all applicants will be able to undertake their own solutions, and the Nutrient Strategy and nutrient offsetting mechanism/framework needs to be in place as soon as possible to resolve this.

**Important Note**

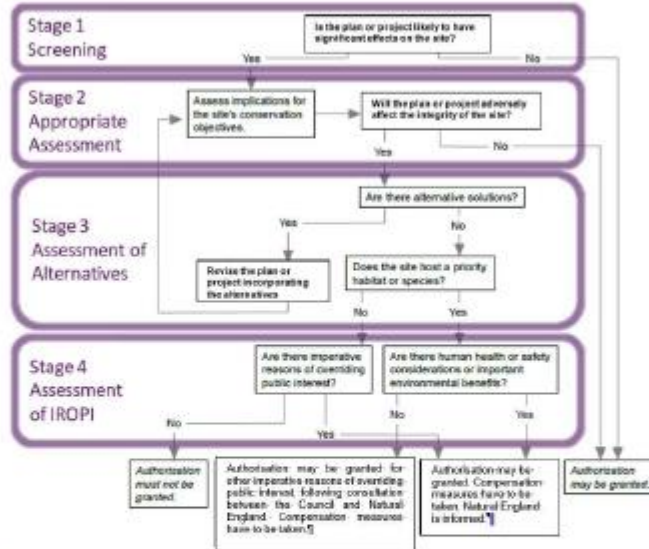
There has recently been contact from some Agents and applicants who believe that SSDC are no longer determining applications. This is not the case. We can, and will, continue to determine applications outside of the affected areas, and those applications where there is no impact.

**The Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar Site Catchment Area**

This catchment map is indicative only in terms of development requiring Habitats Regulations Assessment.



The Habitats Regulations Assessment Process



The Habitats Directive provides a derogation under article 6(4) which allows such plans or projects to be approved provided three tests are met:

- There are no feasible alternative solutions to the plan or project which are less damaging.
- There are "imperative reasons of overriding public interest" (IROPI) for the plan or project to proceed.
- Compensatory measures are secured to ensure that the overall coherence of the network of European sites is maintained.