

## **TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **TRANSPORT**

7.1 Transport is a key element of the Joint Structure Plan and the implementation of the transport policy will make a major contribution in planning for a more sustainable future. It is a vital component of modern society. High levels of car ownership have facilitated a greater freedom of travel for those with access to a car and a greater separation of the home from the workplace. However, the cost of greater mobility includes increasing atmospheric pollution, noise, visual intrusion into rural landscapes and urban centres and physical damage to buildings from increased flows of traffic. The effects on human health of the increased reliance on private transport are an important consideration in sustainable development. Transport strategies are detailed in the Local Transport Plan (LTPs), which cover the period, 2001 - 2006.

7.2 Somerset and Exmoor have very high levels of car ownership with 78% of households within the County of Somerset having access to a car, although not all members of the household have such access whenever they may need it. Such dependence on private means of transport may lead to social exclusion in rural areas, for those without access to private transport. A significant minority of households rely on other means of transport than the private car, to gain access to services they need. The increasing level of car ownership, among other things, is related to economic prosperity and given past and projected economic performance of the area covered by the Joint Structure Plan, it is likely that there will be continuing growth. Past increases in car ownership have been accompanied by growth in traffic volumes, up 50% between 1983 and 1992 in Somerset alone. Therefore, the problems associated with the unrestrained use of these vehicles are likely to continue unless action is taken to modify the pattern of car use in both Somerset and Exmoor.

7.3 The overall strategy of the Joint Structure Plan has been influenced by a national recognition of the fact that the current increasing use of the private car is unsustainable. The intention, in the plan area, is to maximise the level of accessibility to services for those using more sustainable modes of transport, such as walking, cycling and public transport in order to allow a choice. A more sustainable land use approach is to concentrate new development within or well related to existing urban areas, at appropriate locations and densities and encouraging mixed-use development. The preferred land use strategy focuses new housing and employment primarily on the settlements designated as Towns in Policy STR 2. By doing so it addresses some of the environmental problems associated with the private car by maximising the potential for shifts to other modes of transport. In addition, in the future, different forms of service delivery, by government and commercial organisations, such as e-government and e-tailing, may provide alternative means of access to services for some people without the need to travel. This would, in turn, contribute to a reduction in the damage to the environment and the demands placed on maintaining the existing transport infrastructure network.

7.4 Part of the justification for this strategic approach flows from the analysis of commuting patterns within Somerset and Exmoor. Journeys to work made within the fifteen Towns make up nearly one-third of all journeys to work in Somerset. Of these trips, as many are made by sustainable modes of transport, walking, cycle, public transport, as by car. This is mainly because these trips are relatively short, averaging just over 2km in length. In contrast, journeys to work out of the urban areas and from rural Somerset and Exmoor are dominated by car driving and are likely to remain so.

7.5 Land use policies should not be seen as an immediate panacea for the adverse effects of transport in Somerset and Exmoor. In the short term, the basic distribution of housing, employment and other land uses will not change greatly. Therefore, in addition to the strategic

land use approach, town transport strategies have been prepared to address transport issues in the fifteen Towns. These have been undertaken in conjunction with the district-wide local plans and will therefore be integrated with local land use strategies for the development of settlements, to help to achieve a more sustainable transport system. The aim of the strategies referred to in Policy 40: Town Strategies, is to make the use of sustainable modes of transport more attractive and easier. In addition, these strategies look at the wider rural areas around towns to examine the feasibility of alternatives to the car for the longer rural journeys. These alternatives include bus, rail and park and ride sites on the edges of larger towns.

## **LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN**

7.6 Many people in Somerset and Exmoor are not well served by public transport, or may find services out of reach on foot or by cycle or due to physical disability. Furthermore, the majority of freight movements in the plan area are by road. A balanced approach to transport is therefore required, with expenditure on road improvements and maintenance, as well as investment in alternatives to the private vehicle. It is likely that increased congestion will be unavoidable and this, itself, may make alternatives to the private car more attractive. However, congestion creates environmental problems and may not increase the attractiveness of the bus as an alternative to the car unless special provision can be made for bus priority measures. In the planning process the provision of new transport infrastructure should be properly linked with any proposals for land use change that will generate additional journeys. Transport investment should also aim to integrate different modes of transport. The LTP sets out the objectives and priorities for transport investment that have been established through a comprehensive process of local involvement and partnership working with stakeholders and agencies. The LTP objectives develop national objectives for safety, the environment, the economy, accessibility and integration as well as localised concerns about management of the road network, the promotion of leisure and tourism and, travel awareness.

### **Objectives**

- To protect and enhance the built and natural environment;
- To improve safety for all who travel;
- To contribute to an efficient economy and to support sustainable economic growth in appropriate locations;
- To promote accessibility to everyday facilities for all, especially those without a car;
- To promote the integration of all forms of public transport and land-use planning, leading to a better, more efficient transport system;
- To maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of the road network and manage the traffic on it;
- To encourage and promote leisure and tourism opportunities within the County in a more sustainable manner; and,
- To increase awareness of the wider impacts of travel behaviour.

## **POLICY 39 TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Proposals for development should be considered having regard to:**

- **the management of demand for transport;**
- **achieving a shift in transport modes to alternatives to the private car and lorry wherever possible; and**
- **the need for improvements to transport infrastructure.**

7.7 The overall aim of this policy is to reduce the need for journeys and, where these are necessary, to encourage alternatives to the private car and lorry where possible. The management of demand will form an increasingly important approach to the consideration of development proposals. PPG 13: Transport (1994), and the draft, revised, version of the document which was published in October 1999, set an overall national framework in which the reduction of the need to travel is an important element. This can be addressed by locational policy that seeks to relate development to existing urban areas. Development that provides for a mix of uses may reduce the need for journeys. In planning for rural settlements provision of some development in villages and rural centres, which have a good range of facilities, will assist in reducing demand for travel. Town and town centre strategies may assist through encouraging mixed use development, parking policies, reuse of previously developed land and buildings and the focusing of development on Towns.

7.8 A freight strategy and freight route hierarchy have been prepared as part of the Local Transport Plan to encourage more freight movement by alternative means and to try to reduce the impact of heavy goods vehicle movements on settlements. It is recognised, however, that many of the larger development sites that will be allocated through district-wide local plans, will be in locations where access during the construction stage will only be possible by road and that most of the journeys involving deliveries to and from the sites will be by lorry. This should not prevent the provision of alternative methods of transport access to the development once the construction work is completed.

7.9 The need to reduce pollution is acknowledged and this is to be achieved by encouraging a shift in transport modes to alternatives to the private car. Reducing the need to travel is an integral part of the Joint Structure Plan strategy. Provision for alternatives to the private car and lorry form an important element of the overall strategy of the Joint Structure Plan. The existing transport infrastructure of roads, footpaths and cycleways may be managed to provide for pedestrians and cyclists through traffic management and other measures. Bus priority lanes may be introduced to make the bus more attractive. New development can assist in opening railway stations or increasing the economic viability of the train services. Reductions in the capacity of the highway network may be an option, particularly in town centres where improvement to the environment is a high priority. Park and ride or park and walk may also play a role. The development of rail freight facilities will help to reduce heavy goods vehicle movements. Where access to new development by modes other than the private car are included as part of the development package, consideration will need to be given to the requirements of relevant transport policies in the Joint Structure Plan as well as those contained in the appropriate district-wide local plan.

7.10 In many places the existing infrastructure of roads, public transport facilities, footpaths or cycleways is deficient. New development may be required to contribute towards improved cycle and footpath networks, and improved bus infrastructure or services, to make a modal shift away from the car to be more attractive. In some cases development may necessitate new road building to enable it to proceed.

#### **POLICY 40 TOWN STRATEGIES**

**In Towns a range of measures should be implemented to facilitate more sustainable modes of transport and reduce reliance on the private car in order to improve the living and working environment. Such transport measures should complement development proposals.**

7.11 Accommodating all anticipated future car borne demand is unachievable in the long term. In support of the overall strategy of the Plan, which seeks to concentrate most new development on the Towns, there is a need to move towards a more sustainable transport system that can provide for alternatives to the car. The most sustainable modes of transport are walking and cycling, although there are limits even within settlements, particularly in terms

of time, distance, the individuals health and, the purpose of the journey, as to the extent to which travel by these modes can be encouraged. For longer journeys, public transport becomes the next most sustainable mode of transport. The town transport strategies have developed integrated land use and transport proposals which can find expression in district wide local plans. Since these plans are subject to public consultation, this should encourage their acceptance by transport users.

7.12 The County Council and the National Park Authority in collaboration with the district councils are preparing plans for the following settlements and their rural catchments; Taunton, Bridgwater, Yeovil and Frome. In addition the following smaller settlements will be covered, Burnham and Highbridge, Chard, Cheddar, Crewkerne, Dunster, Glastonbury, Ilminster, Minehead, Shepton Mallet, Street, Wellington, Wells and Wincanton. It should be noted that the reference to 'towns' in this policy does not just refer to those that are designated in Policy STR 2: Towns, as it also includes the settlements of Cheddar and Dunster.

7.13 The range of measures which have been adopted in the strategies is wide and includes; facilities for walking, cycling and people with disabilities, improving public transport by for example the provision of bus priority measures and use of new technology, park and ride/walk, car parking standards and pricing, road improvements, and localised and area wide traffic management measures. One important aim of the strategies is to identify ways of improving the total environment of town centres. However, the range and emphasis of approaches adopted in individual towns will vary according to the circumstances and problems in each settlement. Whilst each of the town strategies is focused on the transport requirements of each of the designated settlements, consideration will also have to be taken as to how this fits in with the wider Local Transport Plan Strategies.

7.14 It has to be acknowledged that in some instances the only practical solution to a settlement's traffic problems may involve the construction of new, or significant alteration of an existing part of the local road network. It is not the role of the Joint Structure Plan to determine how such projects will be funded. Such matters will be addressed through a combination of the appropriate district-wide local plan(s) and Local Transport Plan(s).

#### **POLICY 41 CORRIDOR STRATEGIES**

**The following transport corridors are of strategic importance:**

- **Taunton/Bridgwater to Minehead;**
- **Wellington/Taunton/Bridgwater (Exeter - Bristol).**
- **Taunton/Bridgwater to Street, Glastonbury, Wells/Shepton Mallet.**
- **Taunton to Yeovil and the Dorset boundary.**
- **Shepton Mallet to Yeovil and the Dorset boundary.**
- **Cheddar to Frome and the Wiltshire boundary.**
- **Exeter to Andover/Salisbury.**

**Within these corridors, transport will be managed in order to:**

- **achieve transfer to more sustainable transport modes;**
- **improve safety and environmental conditions;**
- **enhance the centres of settlements along the corridor.**

**Where no suitable alternative solutions are available, provision may be made for local bypasses or highway improvements.**

7.15 The transport corridors in Policy 41 refer to larger settlements that are, or could be, linked by a number of transport routes and/or modes and are of strategic significance in terms

of their relationship to each other and the transport movements they generate. The overall strategy of the Joint Structure Plan recognises that different settlements within the plan area have different functions that are reflected in the strategic policies. In selecting these corridors for transport plans a number of considerations are involved.

- While it is desirable to reduce the number of journeys and their lengths it is recognised that long journeys to larger settlements may be required for certain services, in addition some settlements are particularly dependent on others for a number of purposes.
- The majority of goods in the county are moved by road. It is therefore important that there is an inter-urban road network that enables safe and efficient movement.
- Traffic flows through some settlements are such that they cause environmental damage and in certain locations there are hazards that are a danger to road safety.
- Locational policies require a close relationship between high traffic generating activities, such as warehouses, and the network of National and County Routes.
- Some activities such as tourism and mineral extraction are tied to particular locations and heavy traffic flows create specific problems.
- Some corridors form part of a national network that link settlements outside the county with the motorway and trunk roads and major urban centres.

7.16 Corridor transport studies have followed a simplified and largely consultative approach to examining the need and scope for traffic calming, traffic management, opportunities for modal shift, local by passes, town or village centre enhancements and major highway improvements. Reports were produced by consultants for consideration by Somerset County Council on each of the specific corridors. Somerset County Council incorporated elements of the studies into its Local Transport Plan. The various corridor study reports also formed part of the 'background' documentation to the Local Transport Plan itself. This work has enabled identification of a limited number of priority routes that will be examined in more detail. These routes are:

- North-West Taunton
- A358 Henlade
- West Somerset Strategic Access Routes (A39)
- Central Somerset Strategic Access Route (A39/A361)

7.17 The role of bus and rail will require close examination to identify any potential for establishing or reopening railway stations and expanding services. Opportunities are identified in the Local Transport Plan public transport strategy. Where separate corridor strategies meet or cross, account will be taken as to how they relate to each other and, where, appropriate, the influence they will have on those settlements that are the subject of the Town Strategies in Policy 40.

## **POLICY 42 WALKING**

**Facilities for pedestrians should be improved by maintaining and extending the footpath network, particularly between residential areas, shops, community facilities, workplaces and schools and by ensuring that improvements to the highway provide for safe use.**

7.18 In moving towards a more sustainable transport policy the importance of this mode of transport must be recognised and provided for in relation to the location of new development

and site layouts. Nearly all journeys involve at least some movement on foot. About 13% of journeys to work in Somerset and Exmoor are made on foot; the figure is considerably higher for journeys within the urban areas, especially the smaller-sized Towns and the Rural Centres. It is recognised that there is greater scope for influencing pedestrian journeys in these urban areas as opposed to the smaller scattered settlements in rural areas.

7.19 This policy emphasises the need to maintain and expand the opportunities for pedestrians so that they are able to travel with safety and security. This can be provided through the development of a comprehensive network of footpaths for the specific use of pedestrians. The design of such facilities can reduce the risk of crime. The policy will be achieved through traffic management measures and town centre improvements and in considering the location and design of development especially between different types, such as residential, leisure, retail and employment. When considering certain types of development, account will need to be had of the requirements of other relevant policies of the Joint Structure Plan, such as Policy 18 and Policy 49, and those of the appropriate district-wide local plan. In addition shared use of facilities with cyclists may be used where it is safe to do so. A pedestrian strategy has been prepared as part of the Local Transport Plan.

### **POLICY 43 ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

**Facilities for people who are mobility impaired should be improved by maintaining and extending the network of suitable footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes by facilitating ease of access to other transport infrastructure and new development.**

7.20 It is essential that transport is accessible to all and this approach must extend through all modes. This policy recognises that some members of the population are more restricted in their ability to move about than most. The needs of the mobility impaired should be taken into account in the context of development and access to transport infrastructure. The provision and maintenance of facilities to a standard that ensures that they are accessible to people who have restricted physical and/or sensory mobility, will ensure that they are suitable for use by all in the community. This is an important consideration in the planning of town centres particularly in respect of the provision of street furniture. In rural areas bridleways and cycleways may be suitable for providing alternative safe routes to footpaths for those who have restricted mobility.

### **POLICY 44 CYCLING**

**Urban and longer distance facilities for cyclists should be improved by maintaining and extending the cycle network between residential areas and schools, shops, community facilities and workplaces, and by making the best use of existing highway infrastructure. Improvements to the highway should provide for safe use by cyclists.**

7.21 Cycling is an energy-efficient and low-polluting form of transport that should be provided for as part of an overall strategy for increasing the use of more sustainable transport modes. Over 6% of journeys to work by Somerset and Exmoor residents are made by cycle, compared to 4% in the rest of the country. Cycling is therefore starting from a reasonable basis in the plan area and a number of measures are planned to aid cycling. This policy identifies the approach that may be taken to improve the opportunities for cycling both within settlements and by the provision of long distance routes. Initiatives to encourage cycling in sensitive areas, such as 'Pedal the Levels' should help to ensure that sustainable tourism initiatives are developed. The potential of disused or active railway lines and canal and riverside banks is being investigated, although it falls below the development of urban routes in terms of priority.

7.22 In support of encouraging greater cycle usage, policy targets for increased cycle use will be set in line with the goals of the National Cycling Strategy as well as strategies which set out to achieve this document's other aims. These will include such issues as; the inclusion of cyclists' needs in all transport and development plans, provision of cycle facilities as part of residential and commercial development, safe storage facilities at employment, retail and leisure facilities, cycle audit of all new highway improvement and traffic management schemes, the encouragement of cycle friendly employer schemes and appropriate monitoring and maintenance procedures. A detailed cycle strategy forms part of the Local Transport Plan.

#### **POLICY 45 BUS**

**Facilities for buses should be improved. This should include measures to give priority to buses and to introduce park and ride systems where these are the most sustainable option.**

7.23 An adequate public transport system is essential to meet the aims of the Joint Structure Plan for more sustainable patterns of development and to provide access to a range of services for the population of the plan area. Somerset and Devon County Councils support a large number of socially necessary routes and is promoting community-based schemes such as social cars as a more effective means of serving dispersed rural populations. However for integrated strategies to be successful, measures must address car drivers. This policy identifies the approach that will help to make bus use more attractive and accessible. Bus priority measures are being considered such as bus lanes, electronic gates and dedicated bus ways. Sites for park and ride facilities, where these are an attractive option, have been identified and may be pursued through Town Strategies. A detailed bus strategy forms part of the Local Transport Plan. Other measures include partial pedestrianisation of town centres that still leave buses free to enter central areas and the provision of bus stations and/or interchange facilities close to central location where there is high pedestrian activity. In conjunction with new development, priority for the bus may be pursued.

#### **POLICY 46 RAIL OPERATION**

**Rail operations should be improved by:**

- **identifying and protecting sites, particularly for employment purposes, in Towns and settlements adjacent or well related to the rail network;**
- **strictly controlling development which would prejudice the future use or expansion of the rail network; and,**
- **identifying opportunities to build or reopen rail facilities and freight terminals.**

7.24 It is recognised that rail transport is best suited to large passenger flows along busy transport corridors. However, accessibility to trains can be improved by the re-opening or, building of new stations or, the provision of additional stopping services would provide useful connections to longer-distance services, and could become an attractive alternative for car commuters. The protection of land is not intended to provide opportunity for all development but only development that is related to those settlements identified for development through the strategy. The requirements of Policy 48: Access and Parking, would also have to be taken account of. Local rail transport is being considered as an option in certain parts of the plan area.

7.25 A long-standing policy of the Joint Structure Plan has been to encourage the transport of minerals and heavy goods by rail. While this remains valid, a need exists to state more

specifically how promotion of the transport of goods by rail might be effected. This policy encourages rail side firms and activities to provide direct access to the rail network. It also provides for the safeguarding of the existing rail infrastructure including sidings, cuttings, embankments and bridges that could feasibly be re-used. Without this provision there is a likelihood of their progressive loss to other uses. Whilst encouraging the retention of existing rail links and associated infrastructure, Policy 46 does not seek to stimulate proposals that would be contrary to the requirements of Policy STR 6 on development in the countryside. A detailed rail strategy forms part of the Local Transport Plan.

#### **POLICY 47 INTERCHANGE FACILITIES**

**Provision should be made for the improvement or development of interchange facilities between different modes of transport.**

7.26 It is important that in the planning process the provision of new transport infrastructure is properly linked with any proposals for land-use change that will generate additional journeys. Transport investment should also aim to integrate different modes of transport. For example, the attractiveness of public transport services can be enhanced by the careful planning of interchange facilities, as well as by the willingness of operators to introduce mechanisms such as through ticketing. The importance of the provision of transport interchange facilities as a means of transport management was highlighted in the U.K. Round-table report, Making Connections, published in 1997. New or improved interchanges should aim to provide for the accommodation of different modes of transport including car parking, where necessary, safe cycle storage and well related to the footpath network. In addition, new development, near or well related to transport interchanges, would bring the potential of using transport modes other than the private car.

#### **POLICY 48 ACCESS AND PARKING**

**Developments which generate significant transport movements should be located where provision may be made for access by walking, cycling and public transport. The level of parking provision in settlements should reflect their functions, the potential for the use of alternatives to the private car and the need to prevent harmful competitive provision of parking.**

**The level of car parking provision associated with new development should:**

- **first, take account of the potential for access and provide for alternatives to the private car, and then,**
- **should be no more than is necessary to enable development to proceed.**

7.27 Car parks in many developments can cover significant land areas and the ready availability of car parking encourages car use. The overall aim of policy is to make the most efficient use of the existing parking spaces available. This is consistent with the strategic approach of the Joint Structure Plan that seeks to concentrate development in or adjacent to existing Towns and to make the maximum use of previously developed land and buildings. New development should provide a level of parking which is consistent with the maximum necessary to enable the development to proceed and to function efficiently. Parking availability can affect the choice of means of transport individuals may select and the location of development.

7.28 There is a need for a consistent approach at the strategic level, throughout the plan area. However, this needs to avoid unfair and un-necessary competition between the larger settlements, such as the Towns and Rural Centres, and the Local Planning Authorities within it. The Joint Structure Plan is designed to provide strategic guidance and a framework of policies that Local Planning Authorities through their district-wide local plans can interpret and develop to suit local circumstances. There is also a need to identify a scale of development that is being considered for this type of policy. If no indication of scale is provided, the application of this policy, in relation to smaller scale projects and businesses could inhibit their potential development. Also it has to be recognised that there is no single solution to resolving the issues of parking and access. What is appropriate and/or desirable in one location or settlement may not produce the same level of benefit in another.

7.29 Parking policies are currently being developed, and will vary from Town to Town. They will take account of the needs of residents and town centre and other users and will include a range of measures to influence the pattern of parking. Such measures include pricing, residents parking, standards for new development and commuted payments where justified. A general objective is to reduce the spaces available for long-term commuter parking. Park and share may assist in this. Links between parking policy, accessibility standards and travel plans are being developed. The strategies that emerge from these plans will ensure that the vitality and viability of town centres of nearby settlements is not compromised through competitive policies. The requirements of Policy 48 are consistent with and develop those provided through advice from Central Government contained in PPG 13: Transport (1994).

#### **POLICY 49 TRANSPORT REQUIREMENTS OF NEW DEVELOPMENT**

**Proposals for development should be compatible with the existing transport infrastructure, or, if not, provision should be made for improvements to infrastructure to enable development to proceed. In particular development should:**

- **provide access for pedestrians, people with disabilities, cyclists and public transport;**
- **provide safe access to roads of adequate standard within the route hierarchy and, unless the special need for and benefit of a particular development would warrant an exception, not derive access directly from a National Primary or County Route; and,**
- **in the case of development which will generate significant freight traffic, be located close to rail facilities and/or National Primary Routes or suitable County Routes subject to satisfying other Structure Plan policy requirements.**

7.30 It is considered important that policy guidance is provided in the Joint Structure Plan that is sufficiently comprehensive to enable the Local Planning Authorities, with appropriate detailed advice, to determine proposals based on sound principles. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that where new development will result in the generation of transport movements, that the impact of these additional movements are mitigated in environmental and sustainability terms by maximising the use of existing infrastructure, where appropriate, rather than the creation of new. The provision of indirect access to the National Primary and County Route network from new development is primarily for road safety reasons and is consistent with national planning advice on this matter set out in PPG 13: Transport (1994).

7.31 To meet this requirement, the Strategic Planning Authorities will seek to ensure that development proposals make adequate provision for more sustainable modes of transport and that access is from local roads so as not to compromise the efficient functioning of the route hierarchy. However the policy allows for an exception to this approach, for example, where a clear national or local need is established. In such circumstances direct access to a National Primary or County Route may be acceptable where it is consistent with other policies

in the Joint Structure Plan that apply. It will be for Local Planning Authorities to identify such exceptions through their district-wide local plans following consultation with the appropriate Highway Authority.

## **POLICY 50 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT**

**Traffic management schemes which improve safety, travel conditions and the environment should be implemented to make the best possible use of the highway network. Such schemes should remove or reduce heavy or unnecessary vehicles from settlements or sensitive environments and improve conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users.**

7.32 The purpose of this policy is to promote the principle of traffic management by ensuring that all transport users are able to travel safely and to reduce the adverse impact of traffic. A variety of tools of traffic management are available to the Highway Authorities, such as traffic signals, speed limits, speed cameras, road signing and various engineering measures. They are a versatile element of a balanced transport strategy, providing environmental improvements, easing of traffic congestion and reducing accident numbers. Government advice contained in PPG 13: Transport (1994), supports the use of traffic management measures as a means of encouraging people to use other modes of transport for shorter journeys, such as walking and cycling. The Road Traffic Reduction Act 1998 provides Local Authorities with powers to implement suitable traffic calming measures where appropriate. Traffic calming measures are being increasingly sought by communities in Somerset and Exmoor in order to help to improve road safety. This public acceptance suggests that further measures, such as 20 mph speed limits, could be sought.

## **POLICY 51 ROAD HIERARCHY**

**The road hierarchy will consist of National Primary Routes and County Routes, Distributor Roads and Local Roads. The extent of each type of route/road referred to is that which falls within area of the strategic planning authorities of Somerset County Council and the Exmoor National Park Authority, unless otherwise stated (in brackets).**

**National Primary Routes comprise:-**

### **M5 Motorway**

**A30 (Queensway North Roundabout - A3088 Bunford Lane South)**

**A36 Trunk Road**

**A37**

**A38 (Edithmead Roundabout - North Somerset Unitary Authority boundary)**

**\*A38 (A358 Creech Castle Junction - Obridge Roundabout)**

**\*A38 (Dunball Roundabout - A39 Taunton Road/Broadway Junction)**

**A39 (A38 Dunball Roundabout - A361 Glastonbury)**

**\*A39 (A38 Taunton Road/Broadway Junction - Minehead)**

**A303 Trunk Road**

**A358 (M5, Junction 25 - A303 Southfields Roundabout)**

**\*A358 (M5, Junction 25 - Williton)**

**A361 (A39 Glastonbury - Wiltshire county boundary)**

**A3088 (A30 Bunford Lane South - A303 Cartgate)**

\* These roads are awaiting DETR consideration to be upgraded to National Routes.

County Routes comprise:-

A30 (Excluding section defined as National Route)  
A38 (Edithmead Roundabout - Devon county boundary excluding section defined as National Route)  
A38 (M5, Junction 26 - Chelston Roundabout)  
A39 (Minehead - Exmoor National Park boundary, Blackmoor Gate)  
A39 (A38 Bridgwater - Crandon Bridge)  
A39 (A361 Glastonbury - A37)  
A356  
A357  
A358 (A303 Southfields Roundabout - Devon county boundary)  
A359  
A361 (A38 Walford Cross - A39 Pipers Inn, Ashcott)  
A362  
A366 (A362 - A36)  
A367  
A370  
A371  
A372  
A378  
A396  
A399  
A3065 (A38 Cornishway Roundabout, Taunton - A358 Roundabout near Cross Keys PH, Taunton)  
A3066 (A356 Misterton - Dorset county boundary)  
A3088 (Bunford Lane Central - Henford Roundabout)  
A3098  
A3259 (A38 Monkton Elm - Priorswood Roundabout, Taunton)  
B3081 (A359 Bruton - Leigh Common)  
B3081 (A371 Wincanton - Stoney Stoke)  
B3081 (A303 - Dorset county boundary)  
B3090 (A361 Marston Roundabout - A361 Cemetary Lane)  
B3092  
B3109  
B3136 (A371 Shepton Mallet - A361 Pilton)  
B3139 (A366 - A38 Highbridge)  
B3140 (A38 - Burnham-on-Sea)  
B3145  
B3151 (A371 Cheddar - A39 Glastonbury)  
B3151 (A39 Street - A372 Red Post)  
B3153  
B3165 (A30 Crewkerne - Dorset county boundary)  
B3167  
B3168 (A303 Southfields Roundabout - A378)  
B3170  
B3187 (B3277 Milverton - Chelston Roundabout)  
B3190 (B3191 Five Bells - A39 Washford Cross)  
B3190 (B3191 Raleigh's Cross westward - B3224)  
B3191 (B3190 Raleigh's Cross - Watchet)  
B3222  
B3223 (B3224 - A39 Hillsford Bridge)  
B3224  
B3234  
B3227 (A358 Cross Keys PH - Devon county boundary)

**B3358 (B3223 Simonsbath - Exmoor National Park boundary, Yelland Cross)**

**Classified Un-numbered Roads:-**

**A37 - A362 via Long Cross, Chantry and Whatley**  
**A39 Cannington - Hinkley Point**  
**A39 Pipers Inn - B3151 Marshall's Elm**  
**A359 Bruton - A371**  
**A361 Holwell - Whatley**  
**A362 Oldford via Spring Gardens Seaward Way, Minehead**

**(Remaining public highways within the Plan area fall into the categories of Distributor Roads and Local Roads)**

7.33 Roads are defined according to a hierarchy of function within the county and national road network. The higher categories of road serve strategic and longer-distance journeys. The lower categories generally serve immediate local needs and connect with the higher category for journeys to locations further away. The standard to which the pattern of roads in the county is maintained and improved is guided by the road's standing within the hierarchy. Traffic management measures can also be guided by the defined road hierarchy structure.

7.34 A hierarchy of roads is also an important planning tool that allows development generating inter-urban traffic to be concentrated in areas with accessible to the National Primary Route network or County roads. Conversely it provides part of the control mechanism deterring development with unsuitable access to such routes. To be effective it must be complete, and where gaps or poor standard links occur it can result in traffic using substandard alternatives.

7.35 Somerset County Council has made submissions to the DETR that a number of roads within its area be upgraded from County Route to National Primary Route status. These are being considered but will now have to be assessed in conjunction with the proposals to remove trunk and motorway status from a number of roads in the national strategic route hierarchy following the publication of, A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England, in 1998.

**POLICY 52**  
**FREIGHT TRAFFIC (LORRIES IN THE ENVIRONMENT)**

**Traffic, and particularly lorries, should be encouraged to use National Primary Routes wherever possible through appropriate measures such as positive signing and by discouraging the use of unsuitable roads through traffic management schemes.**

7.36 With regard to making optimum use of the existing transport infrastructure, a major problem centres upon the movement of freight, particularly by heavy lorries. As far as possible all traffic should be encouraged to use the primary route network; this objective applies especially to heavy lorries. The issue is particularly acute in East Mendip where the number of limestone quarries generates heavy concentrations of lorries that are related to the output. While the problem has been addressed in terms of traffic management measures together with new road schemes in other policies, a policy is required to reflect the need to actively promote the use, as far as possible, of National Primary Routes by freight traffic throughout the plan area. Somerset County Council sees, as a long-term national aim, the need to confine the use of lorries over an agreed Gross Vehicle Weight (perhaps 17 tonnes) and an agreed length (perhaps 12 metres) to suitably classified roads. These will be generally motorways and principal Category A roads. A freight strategy and route hierarchy, has been prepared as part of the Local Transport Plan to encourage more freight movement by alternative means and to try to reduce the impact of heavy goods vehicle movements on settlements. Policy 46 of the Joint Structure Plan sets out the requirements which could

encourage and facilitate the transport of goods by rail, especially high volume low value products such as aggregates. This would contribute to reducing the number of freight transport movements made by lorries throughout the plan area, where possible.

**POLICY 53  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND THE  
REGIONS ROAD SCHEMES**

**The following Trunk Road schemes are in the course of evaluation by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions:-**

- **A303 Sparkford - Ilchester Improvement;**
- **A303 Ilminster Bypass Improvement.**
- **A303 Ilminster - Marsh.**

7.37 The M5 motorway (Exeter-Birmingham) provides Somerset and Exmoor with good links to Bristol, the Midlands, the rest of the South West, and to London via the M4. The A303, running through the southern part of Somerset, provides an alternative route linking London and the South East to the counties in the south-west of England. This route is being progressively upgraded by the DETR with complementary schemes in Wiltshire and Devon. The Design Build Finance and Operate (DBFO) is an arrangement whereby a single contractor finances and constructs road improvements, and maintains and operates them for a 30 year period, receiving revenue from the DETR as 'shadow tolls' in proportion to the traffic carried. Following the publication of the White Paper, A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone, in 1998 by DETR all road scheme proposals affecting the national strategic road network are currently being re-assessed.

7.38 Whilst the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions is responsible for improvements to the trunk road network, the Highway Authorities are consulted on overall trunk road strategy and any proposed improvements to individual trunk roads and their programming. The Highway Authority's involvement are essential if the area is to gain the greatest benefit from Central Government's investment in roads. The Strategic Planning Authorities also have a key role in ensuring that Trunk Road improvements have minimal impact on the environment.

**POLICY 54  
TRANSPORT PROPOSALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

**New transport proposals and improvements, particularly road schemes must take into account the need to:-**

- **minimise the impact of proposals through mitigation and compensation measures,**
- **improve or conserve the natural and built environment,**
- **avoid the risk of pollution to the water environment, including water resources,**
- **minimise the consumption of resources both in construction and operation,**
- **minimise conflict with adjoining land uses.**

7.39 The County Council as the Highway Authority for the area covered by the Joint Structure Plan is particularly aware of the possible adverse impact of new road schemes on surrounding areas. For this reason it attaches considerable importance to reducing the impact of new roads and highway improvement schemes on local communities and to integrate them within the local environment. This needs to be addressed in relation to Outstanding Heritage Settlements and Conservation Areas. In many cases the construction of a new bypass has created a far more pleasant environment for the local community. Policy 54 seeks to establish the strategic framework that will ensure the incorporation of requirements affecting transport

development that will minimise the impact of the proposals through mitigation and compensation measures and avoid the risk of pollution, particularly to the water environment, including water resources. Consequently, such developments will be the subject of critical examination, and environmental assessment where appropriate, in order to ensure that the requirements of this policy are satisfied. The Road Traffic Act 1999, provides the legal framework in respect of the measures that will have to be undertaken where road traffic development proposals affect areas designated as of environmental significance.

## **POLICY 55 MAJOR HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS**

**The County Route networks should be maintained and improved where necessary, in the context of the resources available and priorities afforded to other transport investment. The following major road improvement schemes will be implemented before 2011:-**

### **Taunton-highway improvements;**

- **Taunton Inner Relief Road.**
- **Silk Mills Crossing.**

### **Bridgwater-highway improvements;**

- **Bridgwater Northern Distributor Road.**
- **Colley Lane - Southern Exit Route.**

7.40 The major roads elements for the Towns are part of an overall strategy for transport management that include a wide range of measures. However they do form important elements that enable the implementation of other components of the strategies in order to achieve overall objectives. The inter-urban schemes provide for environmental benefits for the communities which are currently experiencing high levels of traffic to the detriment of the local environment and road safety.

7.41 The proposal for Silk Mills Crossing has been incorporated as part of the North West Taunton Package, which was successfully accepted by the DETR as a major scheme bid in the Local Transport Plan in December 2000. This followed the DETR approval of funding for the Bridgwater Northern Distributor Road in the interim Local Transport Plan the previous year. Other major scheme priorities established in the preparation of the Local Transport Plan are:

- A358 Henlade
- West Somerset Strategic Access Route
- Central Somerset Strategic Access Route

7.42 A review of all major highway schemes will take place prior to submission of the Local Transport Plan Annual Review, the first of which will be published in July 2001.

7.43 Policy 40 and Policy 41 that deal with the town strategies and corridor studies respectively, and now form part of the Local Transport Plan, will be developed following work to examine the options available to manage transport. Many of these towns and corridors have long standing highway improvement proposals. Whilst it would be desirable to include many of those road schemes that have been safeguarded through policies in previous structure plans for the plan area, the absence of clear indications that funding would be forthcoming during the Joint Structure Plan Period does not assist in the creating of certainty that the development plan is expected to provide. It will be through the Local Transport Plan and district-wide local plans that the need to safeguard the routes of the historical schemes from other forms of development will be identified and determined. The change in the method

of safeguarding of historic road proposals is consistent with and develops the advice from Central Government contained in PPG 12: Development Plans (1999) and PPG 13: Transport (1994). Any new highway improvement proposals, arising from the Local Transport Plan process, could be subject to public discussion through inclusion in a district wide local plan, should the proposal be sufficiently advanced for public consideration. It would also be open to the strategic planning authorities to bring forward an alteration to the Joint Structure Plan should a major road scheme be considered the most appropriate measure for a particular location.

#### **POLICY 56 ROADSIDE FACILITIES**

**Provision should be made for roadside facilities on National Primary Routes where they are not in conflict with other policies of the Structure Plan.**

7.44 The provision of re-fuelling facilities, parking areas, refreshment facilities, overnight accommodation etc, also helps to encourage the drivers of heavy goods and other vehicles to use the most suitable routes and Somerset County Council therefore wishes to ensure that adequate roadside services at appropriate intervals are provided. The aim of Policy 56 is to provide the strategic policy framework whereby facilities can be provided for HGV and other related traffic on National Primary Routes. This is in order to encourage non-essential traffic to use the strategic network of routes and away from lower grade roads which pass through settlements and sensitive areas.

#### **POLICY 57 GENERAL AVIATION FACILITIES**

**General aviation facilities should be safeguarded from development which would prejudice their future use in the transport network. Proposals for new facilities should be environmentally acceptable and well related to settlements.**

7.45 There are limited civil aviation facilities in Somerset and Exmoor. Bristol Airport functions as a regional airport for the Joint Structure Plan area, other significant civil airports are situated at Bournemouth and Exeter. Whilst Bristol Airport performs an important regional function for commercial aviation purposes, it is poorly served in terms of its accessibility from the strategic highway network, especially the links to Somerset and Devon via the M5 motorway. Public transport links are limited to road-based modes, such as bus and taxi, which primarily provide connections with Bristol. The absence of adequate strategic transport links between Bristol Airport and the strategic planning authorities to its south and west and the lack of suitable alternative means that a potential need and associated demand, for this type of communication link, is not currently being met. This could place parts of the south west, and the region as a whole, at a significant competitive disadvantage compared to other regions throughout the country and Europe. The problem of poor strategic access to the region's airport, has been identified as an issue in the emerging Regional Planning Guidance for the South West. When it is finally approved, this document will provide the future transport and land-use planning strategy for the region up to 2016. It will replace the existing version of RPG 10: Regional Planning Guidance for the South West (1994). The Joint Structure Plan will subsequently be reviewed and amended to incorporate any changes in these areas in order to update and conform to the new guidance.

7.46 The Joint Plan does not include any strategic proposal for the provision of new general aviation facilities and no need was established for the provision of such facilities for the period of this Plan. This reflects advice from Central Government contained in PPG 13: Transport (1994) and RPG 10: Regional Planning Guidance for the South West (1994). General aviation facilities should be safeguarded from development that would prejudice their future use in the transport network. The scope for the future development of these sites will be considered in

local plans, which should also provide the detailed basis for the consideration of proposals for new facilities.

7.47 Local airfields have an important role in providing a service for local employers who make use of aviation to undertake business activities. This is particularly important in view of the increasing pressures on regional airports in the south-west, where scheduled flights may not be available at appropriate times. Also, such facilities can provide opportunities for recreational flying which are limited at regional airports. It is important to ensure that any provision accords with the sustainable development criteria of the Joint Structure Plan, as set out in Policy STR 1, and therefore should be well related to settlements.

## **POLICY 58 PORTS AND WHARVES**

**Existing port and wharf facilities should be safeguarded from development which would prejudice their potential in the transport network. Any proposal for new facilities should be within or related to settlements.**

7.48 Coastal shipping can make a significant contribution to the transport of goods into and out of the Plan area. The last operating commercial port in the Plan area is that of Bridgwater, which has berths at Dunball and Comwich. Dunball Wharf is particularly well located, close to Junction 23 of the M5 and the Town of Bridgwater. There are a number of other closed ports and wharves in the Plan area. The transport potential of these facilities should be safeguarded from development that would prejudice potential for their future use, including tourism and other aspects of shipping. The future development of these facilities will be considered through district-wide local plans.

## **UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

7.49 The Joint Structure Plan is the strategic framework against which the providers of utility services and infrastructure draw up their plans. The utilities comprise waste-water treatment, waste disposal, sewerage, water supply, electricity, gas and telecommunications. All of these require infrastructure investment to ensure long-term supply of services. The distribution of infrastructure and spare capacity were factors in the formation of the Plan strategy that aims to take maximum advantage of the high levels of investment in the main settlements.

7.50 Some of the utility policies do not provide any major expression of the strategy but aim to guide local plan policies in respect of development location to ensure utilities provision. However, two of the policies develop the strategic aim of protecting the environment and resources of the Joint Structure Plan area. The first is a policy to guide the development of renewable energy proposals and the second, to protect the quality and quantity of water resources. These policies will contribute to the conservation of resources locally and nationally but in the case of renewable energy, a balance must be struck between energy conservation and impacts on the local environment.

### **Objectives**

- To conserve energy and water resources to secure their sustainable use.
- To maximise the use of existing and planned utility services and infrastructure.

## **POLICY 59 SAFEGUARDING WATER RESOURCES**

**Protection will be afforded to all surface, underground and marine water resources from development which could harm their quality or quantity.**

7.51 Some aspects of the protection of water resources and their conservation are directly controlled by the Environment Agency under the Water Resources Act 1991. Of equal importance is the pro-active role played by the planning system in preventing development that would cause material harm to water resources and the water environment. Nevertheless, some types of development mainly involving agricultural intensification present threats to water supplies that are not subject to planning controls. The main source of high quality groundwater is the Mendip Hills aquifer between Frome and the Bristol Channel that is subject to pressures from intensive farming and built development. Advice in respect of development and groundwater is available from the Environment Agency, who have produced a document, Policy and Practice for the Protection of Groundwater.

7.52 RPG 10: Regional Planning Guidance for the South West (1994) recognises that it is important that coastal waters are protected from development that could lead to pollution of beaches or harm water quality. This is because the bathing waters of the Region are important for both economic and environmental reasons. Other policies of this plan address development that potentially could affect water quality and Policy 63 makes provision for utilities development including treatment facilities. Detailed policies to control such development are required in local plans and should be prepared in consultation with the Environment Agency to provide a detailed interpretation of Policy 59. In this way, all water resources across the country can be protected on a consistent basis from inappropriate or harmful development.

**POLICY 60  
FLOODPLAIN PROTECTION**

**Areas vulnerable to flooding should continue to be protected from development which would cause a net loss of flood storage area or interrupt the free flow of water or adversely affect their environmental or ecological value. In allocating land for development in local plans, consideration must be given to measures to mitigate the impact on the existing land drainage regime to avoid exacerbating flooding problems.**

7.53 In Somerset and Exmoor, there are areas that are at risk from flooding especially along the coast and on the Levels and Moors. The Environment Agency has prepared indicative Flood Plain Maps under Section 105 of the Water Resources Act 1991. These maps identify the estimated extent of flooding which would occur along main river reaches in a 1 in 100 years event, and 1 in 200 years event for tidal reaches. An indication of the areas within Somerset and Exmoor that could be affected by flooding from the main rivers by a 1 in 100 year event and/or marine inundation, is shown in Figure 7.1. However, for more detailed and accurate information on this matter, reference should be made to the maps prepared by the Environment Agency or, the relevant district-wide local plan. Figure 7.1 also illustrates the extent of land that is less than 9 metres above sea level within the area covered by the Joint Structure Plan.

7.54 Development in flood risk areas could place occupiers in danger and exacerbate flooding problems elsewhere so placing other residents in danger. Any development proposals in such locations should only be considered where it would make a positive contribution towards addressing the flooding issue. This would not just be related to the individual site but also those areas that would be indirectly and adversely affected by flooding as a result of the development. Compensatory flood storage is rarely an acceptable solution. Flood plains are also of environmental value as habitats for a variety of flora and fauna and deserve protection for this reason also. In addition consideration will need to be given to those areas that could be vulnerable to flooding as a consequence of unusual weather activity. Extreme weather conditions over a very small geographical area and a short timescale can have dramatic consequences far out of proportion to what would occur from more sustained activity over a



**Provision should only be made for development in areas vulnerable to marine or tidal flooding where; the development is needed in that location, no alternative location exists for the development and adequate measures exist or can be readily provided to protect the development.**

7.57 Parts of the Somerset and Exmoor coast, typical with many coastal areas, experience periodic marine flooding, whilst other extensive areas are dependant upon protection afforded by sea defences. Policy 15 of the Joint Structure Plan, seeks the location of coastal development in settlements unless there is overriding reason why it should be in a countryside location. Policy 61 seeks to steer development away from coastal areas of the plan area that are at risk of inundation by the sea where development would put future occupiers at risk. An indication of the land that could be subject to marine inundation and/or a 1 in 100 year flood event from the main rivers is shown in Figure 7.1. However, for more detailed and accurate information on this matter, reference should be made to the maps prepared by the Environment Agency under Section 105 of the Water Resources Act 1991 or, the relevant district-wide local plan. Provision should only be made for development in areas liable to marine flooding in exceptional circumstances as set out in the policy above. Somerset has had considerable coastal development and it will be necessary for district councils to consider the detailed application of this policy in consultation with the Environment Agency.

## **POLICY 62 TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

**Provision should be made for the establishment of telecommunications facilities in new development and the development of existing and new systems. Priority should be given to the protection of nationally designated areas.**

7.58 Policy 62 encourages the provision of telecommunications services in general and in new development in accordance with PPG 8: Telecommunications (1992), RPG 10: Regional Planning Guidance for the South West (1994) and, DETR Circular 04/99 Planning for Telecommunications. In areas designated as being of national importance, local planning authorities are able to exercise greater control of telecommunications development through local plan policy and development control. Priority shall be given to the protection of these areas. Specific policies set out in the Environment chapter of this Joint Structure Plan set down guidance in respect of development in these areas. The environmental benefits of some telecommunications development will increase over the Plan period as new technologies are developed which will reduce the need to travel (e.g. teleworking). These should be encouraged provided that no harm is caused to designated areas.

7.59 Government planning advice contained in DETR Circular 04/99: Planning for Telecommunications and the associated legislation requires developers to give greater consideration to the impact of masts and antennas on the surrounding environment as well as just the landscape. The guidance requires developers to demonstrate that the use of existing telecommunications apparatus, including sharing, is not a practical solution and, where a new facility is required that it is of a design that will minimise its visual impact on the environment. It is acknowledged that the guidance provided by Policy 62 is limited when it is compared with that contained in Circular 04/99: Planning for Telecommunications. It is expected that the strategic policy advice provided through this policy will be amended in the subsequent review of the Joint Structure Plan following publication of the revised version of RPG 10: Regional Planning Guidance for the South West. Despite these limitations, the local planning authorities will need to include clear guidance in local plans to develop the objectives of Policy 62.

### **POLICY 63 UTILITIES DEVELOPMENT**

**Provision should be made for utility developments where they respect the environment in which they are located in terms of their scale, location and design.**

7.60 Utility developments, because of their nature, may require rural or open countryside locations rather than being located in settlements, and therefore it is important that the development respects the character of the area. Careful design of development in terms of its scale, siting and appearance can mitigate the impact of otherwise intrusive but necessary development. Other important environmental impacts such as emissions and discharges are controlled under other legislation. Examples of such development include sewage treatment plants that are essential to the maintenance of water quality and the prevention of pollution. Local plans should make specific provision for necessary developments and provide a development control framework for the consideration of planning applications for such developments.

#### **Notifiable Installations**

7.61 Certain sites and pipelines within the county are designated as notifiable installations by virtue of the quantities of hazardous substance stored or used. The siting of such installations will be subject to planning controls aimed at keeping these separated from housing and other land uses with which such installations might be incompatible from a safety point of view. To this end, Local planning authorities will seek the advice of the Health and Safety Executive on the suitability of development in relation to the risks that the notified installation might present to the surrounding population.

### **POLICY 64 RENEWABLE ENERGY**

**Provision should be made, where environmentally acceptable, for the development of renewable energy resources.**

7.62 It is Government policy to stimulate the development and use of renewable energy resources wherever they have prospects of being economically attractive and acceptable.

Renewable energy describes those continuous energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment. These are from the sun, the wind and the oceans and from plants and the fall of water. It also refers to the energy available in wastes and from the earth itself.

7.63 The Non-Fossil Fuel Obligation (NFFO) was established by the Electricity Act 1989, and introduced via two Parliamentary Orders in 1990 and 1991. It provides the main stimulus for the exploitation of renewable energy in England and Wales. It obliges the regional electricity companies to secure a specified capacity of electricity supply from non-fossil fuel sources. Renewable energy from commercially developed technologies can receive a premium price for power generated, paid for by a levy on all sales of electricity to final customers.

7.64 The NFFO enables renewable energy projects to be installed and operated, which in turn promotes confidence in renewable energy for manufacturers, developers and the financial sector. It creates an initial premium for renewable energy to enable it to become fully competitive in due course.

7.65 In 1993 a joint study by South Western Electricity plc and the Energy Technology Support Unit (ETSU) identified two renewable energy schemes in Somerset, both at sewage treatment works. It has identified limited potential for renewable energy from onshore wind,

hydro and landfill gas in Somerset or Exmoor. It was also considered that there is more significant scope for energy from municipal waste, sewerage and farm slurry and arable coppice in Somerset and Exmoor.

7.66 PPG 22: Renewable Energy (1993 & 1994) sets out the Government planning policy in respect of renewable energy. The Plan sets out to balance the Governments aims of promoting renewable energy and protecting the environment. Many renewable energy schemes by their very nature will occur in rural areas or on the coast and therefore the location of proposals should be carefully considered. Development proposals in such locations would need to take account of requirements of Central Government advice on these types of area contained in, PPG 7: The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development (1997), and PPG 20: Coastal Planning (1992). The Joint Structure Plan provides guidance in respect of specially designated areas in the Environment chapter Policies 1 - 7 and Policy 15). Particular care will be exercised when considering proposal in areas subject to national designations such as, Exmoor National Park (Policy 2), Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Policy 3) and the Bristol/Bath Green Belt (Policy 6).

## **WASTE MANAGEMENT**

7.67 The Government's general policy towards waste management is set out in PPG 10: Planning and Waste (1999), PPG 23: Planning and Pollution Control (1994) and the National Waste Strategy. It is based on a hierarchy of :

- waste minimisation;
- re-use of waste;
- recovery of waste (including material recycling, energy recovery and composting);
- safe disposal of waste; i.e. landfill.

7.68 The Government considers that waste management solutions depend on the local waste stream and local considerations. However, it is clear that a sustainable approach to waste management requires a greater emphasis on options at the top of the defined hierarchy, namely the reduction of waste, and less reliance on simple disposal without recovery. The Government also subscribes to the 'proximity principle'. This means that wastes should be disposed of or otherwise managed close to the point at which they are generated. This overall approach is considered to be more responsible and sustainable as it seeks to minimise wastes and the distances over which they are transported. Where wastes cannot be disposed of close to source, it is Government policy to move them either by water or rail transport where this is practical and economic. It is acknowledged that general municipal wastes can usually be dealt with close to source by landfill, but some specialist wastes will have to be transported to regional or national treatment centres. It is also acknowledged that some parts of the waste stream cannot be reused or readily reduced in volume. A number of new waste transfer sites and recycling centres are being established in the plan area for the collection and sorting of wastes.

7.69 It is the role of the Joint Structure Plan and the Waste Local Plan to translate Government policy into local solutions. The Joint Structure Plan provides a comprehensive strategic land use framework for waste management. Somerset County Council will prepare a Waste Local Plan to provide a detailed framework for the management of waste in Somerset.

### **POLICY 65 PROVISION OF WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITIES**

**Provision of land should be made for the management of the forecast waste arising with due regard being had to cross county border waste management issues, in the period to 2011.**

7.70 The waste regulation authority function is now part of the Environment Agency (EA). The EA has recently published the Strategic Waste Management Assessment (SWMA) for the Southwest. This report covers waste arising and disposal in the county for the financial year 1998/1999. The SWMA estimates that during the survey period Somerset produced over 3.7 million tonnes of waste from Agriculture, Municipal, Industrial and Commercial sectors. This included 2.6 million tonnes of waste from agriculture, a further 256,000 tonnes of municipal waste, 216,000 tonnes of industrial waste and 370,000 tonnes of industrial waste. It is estimated that 164,000 tonnes of waste was recycled. Industry was responsible for recycling the majority of the total for Somerset, with commercial and municipal almost equal in proportions. Recycling is more evident in the industrial sector as there are often economic reasons or drivers for recycling certain substances, for example scrap metals.

7.71 It is important to make provision for the disposal or recycling of the waste arising in Somerset and Exmoor in the period to 2011 and consider the future management of waste in the longer term. A waste survey, Your Waste, Your Choice, was undertaken by Somerset County Council, for its area alone, in May/June 1996 to ascertain public attitudes to various methods of waste disposal and to recycling. The actual level of provision will be considered in the Waste Local Plan that will be prepared by the County Council. Waste should be disposed of in a manner that considers the impact on the environment as a whole in order to minimise the risk of pollution. Environmental, historic and economic reasons mean that there are a number of different flows of waste both into and out of the area covered by the Joint Structure Plan. It is not an issue that can be seen in isolation. There are significant flows of waste into and out of the area particularly in relation to North Somerset, Wiltshire and Devon. In many cases, these flows accord with the proximity principle. Consideration will be given to these waste flows in the preparation of district-wide local plans.

#### **POLICY 66 DEVELOPMENT OF WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITIES**

**Provision of land for waste management facilities should be made, utilising previously developed land if appropriate, where:**

- **it is as close as is practical to the source of waste;**
- **the site has satisfactory access and makes use of rail transport where practical;**
- **nuisance to neighbouring land uses is minimised;**
- **provision is made for reclamation and aftercare of the site;**
- **water courses and/or ground water are not adversely affected;**
- **the proposal respects the landscape character of the area, and**
- **proposals to generate energy are included where practical.**

7.72 Policy 66 has been developed so as to provide the strategic framework for the provision of waste management facilities in Somerset alone. New facilities should be located as near to the source of waste as practical in order to minimise the transportation of the waste. They should utilise previously developed land, brownfield sites, where appropriate in order to minimise the use of greenfield sites. It is recognised that it may be necessary to utilise greenfield sites where this presents the best option for the management of waste. It is important that sites have access provision that can accommodate the level of traffic generated by the development. Where practical, use should be made of rail transport in order to minimise road traffic generation, though it is acknowledged that Somerset has few rail freight facilities at the present time.

7.73 Waste disposal and recycling facilities should minimise potential nuisance to neighbouring land uses. The potential for such nuisance would be mitigated by locational considerations and measures to control the use. This includes the control of pollution and especially the protection of watercourses and groundwater. Provision should also be made where appropriate for the reclamation and aftercare of waste disposal sites, in order to

minimise the risk of pollution and the impact of the development within the landscape. The proposal should also respect the landscape character of the area.

7.74 Policy 64: Renewable Energy, sets down strategic guidance in respect of energy production from renewable resources. Energy can be derived from waste in a number of ways including generation of electricity using landfill gas as a fuel and waste incineration.

7.75 A waste transfer site is a waste management facility where waste can be collected for forwarding to a materials recovery facility. Waste transfer sites and materials recovery facilities will play a valuable role in increasing the volume of wastes recycled and as such will make a contribution towards reducing the use of primary materials. The introduction of fees and charges for landfill and the Government's desire to see landfill as the least desirable option in the hierarchy of waste management should generate proposals for waste transfer facilities in the county. Disused quarries and other despoiled land are being viewed by the waste management industry as potential sites for such facilities. However, the geology of many of the quarries in the plan area restricts this use, because of the risk of pollution of water resources. The potential for reuse of previously developed or 'brown-land' for waste recycling facilities should be assessed before greenfield sites are considered, although it is recognised that this may not always present the best option. It is acknowledged that some quarries and despoiled land are more suitable than others in this respect because of their location, access and relationship to the transport infrastructure, proximity to housing and in the case of quarrying method of working in respect to the water table. Unlike minerals extraction, which needs to take place where minerals occur, waste facilities are not so tightly constrained, although in the interests of sustainability, facilities should be situated as close to the source as possible.

**POLICY 67  
WASTE MANAGEMENT IN THE EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AND AREAS  
OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY**

**Provision of waste disposal and recycling facilities should not be made in the Exmoor National Park and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty unless they are in the national interest and no alternative sites are available outside of these designated areas, or the proposal is small in scale and is to meet a specific identified local need.**

7.76 The special quality of nationally designated landscapes makes them generally unsuitable for the provision of waste disposal and recycling facilities. Provision should only be made for such facilities where they are in the national interest and suitable provision cannot practically be made outside of the designated area. However, small scale recycling facilities could be acceptable subject to the usual development control safeguards, particularly because of their contribution to sustainable development and the aims of Local Agenda 21.

**POLICY 68  
USE OF INERT WASTES ARISING FROM DEVELOPMENT**

**Where provision is made for development, the potential and practicality of the reuse of the inert wastes generated should be examined, in order to reduce demand for primary aggregates, minimise traffic movements associated with waste disposal and the land take for landfill facilities.**

7.77 Development proposals can generate significant volumes of inert wastes in the form of soil and rubble. This waste is often disposed of at landfill sites, generating lorry traffic and increasing the land take for landfill facilities. Development proposals should, wherever practical, reuse any inert wastes generated within the development in the interests of achieving development that is more sustainable, particularly in relation to reducing the demand for primary aggregates. For example, these wastes can be used as secondary

aggregates and in landscaping schemes. The potential health issues resulting from the use of inert wastes, generated in this way in development, is subject to control through the Building Regulations.