Dunkerton and Tunley Parish Council – Transport response to the B&NES Local Plan Reset Options Supporting Evidence

This response is submitted on behalf of parishioners in the Dunkerton and Tunley area. The principal concern is not direct housing allocation within these settlements, but the cumulative transport and infrastructure effects of substantial proposed growth in neighbouring communities, particularly along the A367 corridor.

The development options being proposed in Paulton, Peasedown St John, Timsbury, Radstock and Midsomer Norton amount to approximately 4,200–5,000 potential new homes, depending on which options are ultimately taken forward. The Local Plan confirms that the cumulative impacts of development options and associated infrastructure requirements had not yet been fully assessed at the Options stage.

The Local Plan identifies the A367 as one of the principal transport routes linking the Somer Valley with Bath and Bristol. It also acknowledges that the A367 is already subject to peak-hour congestion, that public transport provision has reduced in parts of the Somer Valley, and connectivity improvements must precede further housing and economic development.

There is therefore a clear risk that, without major improvements to public transport and the A367, additional vehicle movements will be displaced onto surrounding rural roads. The Local Plan already identifies examples of local roads being used as "cut through" routes, demonstrating that diversion from principal routes is an existing problem.

For communities such as Dunkerton and Tunley, rat-running is already a problem, rural roads are generally less suited to increased traffic volumes and can present particular concerns relating to road safety, pedestrians, cyclists, noise, air quality and village character.

There is currently no pedestrian crossing point at the A367 at Dunkerton. This raises issues for all residents in Dunkerton but particularly for children crossing to attend school and elderly people being able to access the bus stop for shopping and appointments. This has already been highlighted as an issue with B&NES by the Parish Council but we were unable to make any progress towards a solution.

The B3115 through Tunley is already congested, particularly during rush hours. Therefore, any housing development in Timsbury or Paulton will further worsen this congestion.

The Parish Council therefore considers that the Draft Local Plan should not determine the final scale or combination of these development sites until a corridor-wide cumulative transport assessment has been completed. This should examine the A367 from the Somer Valley through the rural area towards Bath, rather than considering individual development sites in isolation. The B3115 should also be included in this assessment.

That assessment should specifically address:

- cumulative peak-hour traffic generated by the full range of housing and employment growth;
- likely destinations of new residents, including Bath and proposed employment locations;
- the capacity and safety of the A367 and its principal junctions;
- the capacity of the B3115 and its ability to handle increased traffic load;
- diversion and rat-running through Dunkerton, Tunley and neighbouring rural settlements;
- the effect on minor roads, pedestrians, cyclists and village environments;
- realistic future bus capacity, frequency and funding;
- measures required to prevent inappropriate traffic displacement;
- the timing and funding of infrastructure improvements.

The Local Plan's rural transport strategy proposes bus priority on strategic corridors including the A367, but also acknowledges that some rural bus services depend on grant funding whose future is uncertain. It would therefore be inappropriate for the sustainability of major housing allocations to rely upon public transport improvements that are not funded, committed and deliverable before occupation.

The Parish Council supports properly planned development accompanied by appropriate infrastructure. However, the proposed concentration of several thousand additional homes around the Somer Valley and neighbouring villages creates a cumulative transport issue extending well beyond individual housing allocation boundaries. Dunkerton, Tunley and other rural communities must therefore be included explicitly within the transport impact assessment and mitigation strategy before the Draft Local Plan is finalised.