

South Somerset District Council - Local Plan Review

What it means for development in Fivehead & Swell

Residents of Fivehead and Swell, what would you like your Villages to look like in 20 years' time?

This is the question being asked of us by the District Council as they change our Local Plan which dictates what can and cannot be built in the area.

South Somerset District Council has produced a proposal document which is available online or at roadshows they are hosting around the District. They are asking residents to read it (you don't have to plough through the 200 pages, there are only a few sections that relate to us) and give your opinions.

Rural Settlements

The section that affects us is a specific section covering development in rural areas (SS4). In a nutshell, under SS4, new residents must be able to live as sustainably as possible by having easy access to essential facilities that provide for their day to day needs. A rural settlement must have at least four of the following assets;

- Shop/Post Office
- Primary school
- Health centre
- Pub
- Village Hall/ Faith Facility
- Children's Play Area

In any case, if the 4 assets criteria are met, the development cannot exceed 1 hectare and cannot keep being added to. The category, SS4, seeks to divert growth from rural areas to more sustainable places.

Exceptions

There are some exceptions to these rules according to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); if there are material considerations for a particular case and if key sustainability criteria are met. However, the District Council recognises that rural lifestyle provided by the many small villages and hamlets in South Somerset is one of the unique qualities of the District.

Anyone considering building in a rural location,

- Must meet the SS4 criteria above
- Must meet the needs of the settlement (i.e. types and quantities of housing)
- Must have meaningful and robust engagement with the community at an early stage

Rural development has already made a significant contribution to housing delivery in South Somerset, above what was planned. Fivehead & Swell have played their part, having 16 new

houses receiving planning permission in the last 18 months. The District Council notes development has been 'far in excess' of what was anticipated.

Environment

The District Council is keen to concentrate development in towns and larger rural centres where there are jobs and suitable infrastructure, thereby reducing our carbon footprint and impact on the environment. They want us to use cars less to reduce pollution and promote healthy and safe communities. There is strong emphasis on making efficient use of land, matching development to local need while safeguarding and improving the environment, for which Somerset is famous for. Any development must be appropriate to the character and setting of an area.

The Plan sets out a settlement hierarchy, or ranking in size order, making sure development is appropriate to the area. Our nearest area for development is Curry Rivel who are well on their way to meeting their obligations. Fivehead and Swell do not appear in the Housing Availability Assessment, assessing suitable locations to build.

Specific housing

Affordable housing requirements have been calculated with a need for 206 affordable houses in the District per year, which are catered for in our larger settlements. Likewise, self-build and custom build developments are also meeting their targets. SSDC has also directed housing for our elderly population, requiring some level of support, should be built in larger developments.

The question we need to ask ourselves is, 'How will development add to or diminish the sustainability of our community?'

Please go to the SSDC webpage (link below) to register your comments on the Local Plan Review, even if you agree with the proposed policies, please let them know. Please be quick, the deadline for submissions is **18th September 2019**

<http://consult.southsomerset.gov.uk/consult.ti/system/home>

You will be asked to register and then follow the instructions. If you get stuck, please contact Pip Brett (01460 281115) or Jill Wardle (01460 281902)

The document itself is linked below.

<https://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/documents/s25316/7%20LPR%20Appendix%203%20Local%20Plan%20Review%20Preferred%20Options%20Document.pdf>