

Core Strategy Consultation (CD/BH)
FREEPOST BS6529
Bristol
BS1 5BR

13th July 2009

Dear Sir/Madam

Response to BCC Development Principles Consultation

GWE Business West Ltd is a leading membership and economic development organisation delivering an extensive range of services to businesses. As a powerful voice for business we play a major role in shaping and supporting economic growth and success. We represent over 2,000 businesses in the West of England and are the principle business organisation for the sub region. In addition to providing a wide range of business services, advice and support to its members GWE Business West supports the economic and social prosperity of the West of England.

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the latest consultation document as we believe that getting the development principles right is a key element of the Core Strategy and the future planning of Bristol.

In previous responses we have made reference to the need to be ambitious. Bristol as a core city is the economic hub of the region, provides key economic growth opportunities and makes an essential contribution to the prosperity of the region. This we believe should be the starting point for the Core Strategy, with the spatial options and development principles clearly reflecting the sub regional role Bristol fulfills – the current document still does not reflect this and does not make enough of the key role Bristol plays across the sub region and the south west as a whole.

It is also our belief that the Development Principles document is where clear statements need to be made about comprehensive planning for growth at a local and sub regional level. It is these principles that need to shape the delivery of the appropriate and necessary services and facilities alongside new housing and which will guide the provision of land and buildings, in the right places to accommodate the necessary employment growth.

The recognition of the need for firm linkages to adjacent areas is key to the success of the strategy. What happens around Bristol in terms of urban extensions, green infrastructure linkages, transport improvements and

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employment land provision will be critical to the successful regeneration of South Bristol and the continuing development and success of the city centre. Not enough emphasis is currently placed on the importance of joint working, cross boundary working or the need for joint area action plans and joint delivery vehicles to bring forward the planning of the proposed urban extensions. This is a concern we have raised throughout the consultation process and where the Development Principles need to be amended in order to reflect this as a priority.

In addition, the early delivery of infrastructure to support growth is perhaps the most important aspect of encouraging growth and developing mixed and sustainable communities. The development principles should make reference to infrastructure delivery as a key priority for growth and have clear statements about what the key accessibility and connectivity issues are: congestion measures, airport/port to city centre access, general access to the airport, connectivity to and across south Bristol etc.

A particular area of concern for us would be the lack of any reference to employment land and development as a principle. Too often the focus has been on housing provision without adequate thought and planning for employment – the provision of sufficient sites in the right places is crucial to the continuing development of our economy. A clear statement in the Development Principles is needed to reflect this as a priority.

The issue of securing infrastructure and developer contributions is another area where we believe there is an opportunity for the council to be more innovative and forward thinking about how it secures development gain, yet the approach is to play safe and continue with a reworking of Section 106 agreements. In other areas, authorities have devised new schemes, such as the roof tax in Milton Keynes, why isn't Bristol considering such an approach?

With very best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tessa Coombes', written in a cursive style.

Tessa Coombes
Director of Policy & Strategy
GWE Business West