



SOMERSET COUNCIL CONSERVATIVE GROUP
BLUE NOTE FOR JANUARY 2025.

LOCAL PLAN CALL FOR SITES.

Somerset Council will **be launching a Call for Sites in the new year** as it prepares to develop its first Local Plan. The new Somerset Local Plan will generally supersede all existing former district council Local Plans, which will remain part of the Development Plan until they are officially replaced.

The Call for Sites is a six-week period where landowners, developers, and site promoters are invited to submit land they want to be considered for future development.

Submissions can be for various uses including housing, economic development, gypsy and traveller pitches and plots, and renewable energy installations.

You can keep up to date with the Somerset Local Plan and other planning policy news by signing up To the Plan-it Somerset Newsletter.

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/plan-it-somerset-newsletter-sign-up/>

NEW FOSTERING CAMPAIGN

20th December saw the release of Somerset Councils latest Fostering promotional film which is being aired on ITV and SKY from 20 December 2024 **until 16 February 2025**.

You can watch out for the film during ad breaks - you can also view it here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZc-vespgeE>

More foster carers are urgently needed in Somerset – can you make a difference to a child's life and help to change a child's story? - call 0800 587 9900.

<https://www.fosteringinsomerset.org.uk/>

SOMERSET BUSINESS SURVEY 2024-25

Somerset Council, working with the Somerset Growth Board, has recently launched the fourth iteration of the Somerset Business Survey.

The survey is an opportunity for Somerset businesses of all types, shapes and sizes, to tell the Council and Growth Board what it is like to do business in the county and what is most important to them. Questions ask respondents about the nature of their business, their growth aspirations, as well as their barriers to, and opportunities for, success. For example, if businesses are facing challenges around recruitment or staff retention, struggling with digital connectivity or getting access to finance, or simply lacking the space needed to grow, we want to know.

The survey that **closes on 24 January 2025** will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and is anonymous, but businesses can provide contact details at the end to be kept in the loop about the survey results and details of other economic development initiatives.

The results of the survey will help shape the new Somerset Economic Prosperity Strategy, which is currently in development, and will also support the wider work of the Economic Prosperity Service.

<https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/economic-development/business-survey-2024/>

Somerset Councillors came together to back local farmers and food producers in their last meeting of 2024. With 3 motions passed that backed our rural communities, there was a clear message that Somerset Council is pro-farmers and the vital role they play in our economy and environment.

Conservative Councillors Faye Purbrick and Lucy Trimnell delivered impassioned statements for the debates that followed their proposed motions to oppose the family farm tax and support meat, dairy and arable farmers across our county.

More details of the motions can be found here:-

<https://www.somersetcountyconservatives.org.uk/news/support-our-farmers-and-stop-family-farm-tax>

There are nearly 4,500 farms in Somerset employing nearly 10,500 people. NFU analysis suggested 75% of commercial farms will be affected by this new tax meaning a total potential impact in Somerset of over 3300 farming families.

ROAD CLOSURE NEEDED FOR EASTOVER CELEBRATION MILE WORKS

Somerset Council and contractor Taylor Woodrow have announced a change to traffic management to help deliver the next stage of the Celebration Mile improvements in Bridgwater. This project is funded as part of the Town Deal £3.6 billion package approved by the previous government in 2019. £23.2m was awarded to the Bridgwater Town Deal.

The initial plan had been to carry out the remaining works on Eastover in Bridgwater under a one-way traffic control.

However, unmapped utilities under the road have made work more complicated and impossible to do safely without a full road closure. There have already been several near misses with traffic failing to comply with the current one-way system.

Eastover will therefore be closed to all traffic from 2 January for up to 6 months – though the team will be doing its utmost to complete the works sooner. Without a full road closure, the remaining work on Eastover is likely to take up to 9 months.

Eastover will remain open to shoppers and visitors throughout, and extra signs will make it clear the street is open for business.

Traders and affected residents are being kept up-to-date on the closure.

YEOVIL TRIANGLE SET TO RE-OPEN EARLY IN THE NEW YEAR

One of the most exciting areas in the rejuvenation of Yeovil town centre is due to be unveiled to the public in **early January 2025**. Yeovils Triangle area will unveil a new amphitheatre style entertainment space and community hub.

The area known as 'The Triangle' at the eastern end of the town has been the focus of complex and extensive redevelopment and upgrades, in a transformation designed to boost much needed investment in Yeovil's economy.

The creation of the state-of-the-art amphitheatre style entertainment space came about after local people and businesses shared ideas about what they would like to see in their town, for their community.

The space features seating for about 100, around an open space that incorporates a water feature which will be commissioned in the spring.

The open space in the heart of town will be a place for people to gather or simply take time out during the day. A raised stage with large screen for live performances and screened events, as well as art installations commissioned and co-created with local community groups during the Covid pandemic, will create what is hoped will become a popular focal point for the community.

This item was also on last months sheet – PEOPLE LIVING IN SOMERSET ARE REMINDED THEY HAVE ACCESS TO A DEMAND RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT SERVICE KNOWN AS SLINKEY

Demand responsive transport is a bookable, flexible service which residents can use if there is no public transport alternative. All users need to do is register online to start using the Slinky bus to get to the shops, to visit friends and family, get to college or social clubs, or access medical appointments.

You can also call:

- [01749 880482](tel:01749880482) for Mendip area
- [01823 331266](tel:01823331266) for Sedgemoor, Taunton and Wellington area
- [01643 707090](tel:01643707090) for West Somerset area
- [01935 477399](tel:01935477399) for South Somerset area

The service is available to anyone in Somerset who does not have access to a regular bus service, which is especially helpful to those in more rural locations.

Previously having your own transport precluded you from using the service but from 1 September, that has changed – car owners can use Slinky.

This item was also on last months sheet but consultation still open - HAVE YOUR SAY ON A NEW POLITICAL MAP FOR SOMERSET COUNCIL – CONSULTATION CLOSES ON 20TH JANUARY.

The Boundary Commission has launched a consultation on new division boundaries in Somerset - <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset>

A public consultation has been launched to help shape new council divisions for Somerset Council. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England wants to hear people's views on where they live, to help make sure that the new divisions reflect the size and shape of local communities.

An electoral review is being carried out to make sure that each local councillor represents about the same number of electors, and that the divisions they represent reflect community identities.

The Local Government Boundary Commission has decided that the number of councillors in Somerset Council should be **96**. This is a change from the current council, which has **110** members.

This stage of the consultation last for 10 weeks and closes on 20 January

22 October 2024 - 20 January 2025	carry out an initial public consultation with communities
3 June 2025 - 11 August 2025	carry out a public consultation on our proposals
2 December 2025	publish our recommendations
TBC	ask Parliament to approve our recommendations
2027	New arrangements apply to local election

Boundary Commission Timetable:-

OTHER OPEN CONSULTATIONS - <https://somesetcouncil.citizenspace.com/>

Proposed local validation checklist – closes 10th January

Budget Consultation – closes 15th January

2026-27 Admission arrangements for Somerset Council closes 20th January

Somerset Business Survey 24/25 – closes 24 January

Public Space Protection Order Consultation for former Mendip District Council Area

