

FOBRA MEETING 4th JUNE 2026

PLANNING REPORT

LOCAL PLAN

The principal planning issue that is likely to be of interest to FOBRA over the next few months is the Draft Local Plan which is due to go to the Cabinet for approval on 2nd July this year, and to be issued for public consultation on 16th July (these dates still to be confirmed).

The Draft of the Local Plan follows two previous stages, (the Local Plan Options document in 2024, and the Local Plan Reset document in 2025).

FOBRA expressed four main concerns over the Local Plan Options document, namely:

1. Lack of strategic transport input to development of a strategy,
2. Green Belt – lack of clarity on the assumptions that had led to the proposals for land release;
3. Lack of quantification of the capacity of the City to absorb additional growth,
4. No indication of how the demand for housing might be allocated in each of the options identified.

The Local Reset Document was published for consultation in February 2025. It responded to comments made on the earlier document, but more significantly, it had to respond to a change in Government policy on housing targets. Subsequent to the Local land Options document, the Government doubled the housing target for Bath and North East Somerset from 14,500 dwellings over a 20 year period to 29,000 dwellings.

The Reset Document outlined clear strategic options, and linked growth areas to the transport system. However, it was lacking in any clear indications of how the new target of 29,000 dwellings might be distributed around the District.

For Bath, there was a very thorough identification of potential development areas, but these included areas covered by statutory designations designed to restrict development, including Green Belt land, and sites within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now renamed a National Landscape). FOBRA submitted its critique of the Reset Document in November 2025.

Thus, one of the big issues to be resolved in the forthcoming Draft Local Plan will be the balance in new housing provision between a highly constrained Bath and the other parts of the District. Already concerns have been raised in the Somer Valley and in the areas closer to Bristol, that Bath will claim that it is constrained by its Heritage status, thus forcing higher levels of development on them. The assumptions on the capacity of the existing City, and the areas that might be released for further development of the City beyond its current limits, will be of primary interest to all FOBRA members. It will be

interesting to see how Banes is proposing to develop the transport system across the District in tandem with the development of new growth areas. In conjunction with the B&NES local plan process we should be mindful of Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire housing targets and their traffic impacts on the city of Bath as a regional shopping, employment and healthcare centre.

The current timescale is for public consultation during the summer of 2026, submission of the Plan for Public Examination in Autumn 2026, with adoption of the Local Plan sometime during 2027.

RE-DEVELOPMENT OF THE REC (APPLICATION 23/03558/EFUL)

in January 2026 FOBRA wrote to the Council expressing concern at the lack of precision in the wording of some of the conditions attached to the consent for the redevelopment of the Rec by Bath Rugby. It is felt that a number of the conditions were loosely worded and are capable of being interpreted in ways that could be prejudicial to Bath residents, especially (but not exclusively) those living close to the ground.

The conditions referred to are mostly designed to control the management of the ground post-completion. Reference was made to conditions concerning traffic management, travel plans including crowd management, disabled access and noise management control. Also mentioned was the removal and replacement of trees.

FOBRA was seeking assurances that once the new stadium is operational, and as these conditions are discharged, the Council will make every endeavour to ensure that the interpretation of the conditions attached to the consent, including the terms of the S.106 Agreement, will be in the best interests of the residents of the City, and in particular, of those residents living close to the stadium.

To date no response has been received, though the FOBRA submission has been added to the application website. We are continuing to seek an acknowledgement from the Council that FOBRA's concerns are recognised and considered valid, and that the interest of residents will be paramount when adjudicating on matters relating to the operation of the new stadium.

MJW

23rd May 2026