

# Lawrence Weston Design Statement



March 2016

Submission Version

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## Purpose

This Lawrence Weston Neighbourhood Design Statement (LWNDS) is a public document that gives a guide to the character of Lawrence Weston highlighting the best of the existing buildings and landscape, including historical and good new developments, which make the neighbourhood distinctive.

This statement makes recommendations to encourage and influence new development which enhances and complements what works, improves what works less well, and contributes towards the vision statement for the area which aims to create an attractive, sustainable and well designed neighbourhood. However, the purpose of this Design Statement goes far wider than delineating essential strategic goals for new development in Lawrence Weston. The scope for new development amounts to around 10% of LW housing. While new developments are an important, vital, subject for this Statement, it is also concerned with the character and quality of refurbishment and renovations affecting both public and private housing stock; and with both associated, and independent, changes to the street scene, on the landscape design of publicly accessed space, and on the changes to immediate local environments and their impact on overall estate character.

“Lawrence Weston is a warm and welcoming place...but when you arrive on the estate it doesn’t look or feel welcoming at the moment...this is a great place....we want to say something new about the neighbourhood..... this place is on the up” new resident, 55.

We have linked this statement to our Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), and offer it as further detail for the design policies in that plan. This Statement is written to provide guidance on the

requirements of the community for both developers, planning officers, and elected representatives tasked with making planning choices, as well as those agencies and authorities whose job it is to generate plans, priorities and programmes, and chose contractors, for development and land use works of all kinds affecting the Lawrence Weston Neighbourhood Planning Area.

Beyond housing, this Statement is to be a guide for other land use work and initiatives with an impact on Lawrence Weston, including the planning of Section 106 Planning Orders, the use of Community Infrastructure Levy funding, as well as planning by the Neighbourhood Partnership and wider City development authorities and parallel agencies.

Lawrence Weston is recognised as a neglected and challenged environment. The whole impetus of the Neighbourhood Planning Group is to turn this around with improved quality of housing and urban design. It is the ambition of the Lawrence Weston Neighbourhood Planning Forum that new homes built in the area will not be seen as merely adequate by their householders, but highly desirable for both their exceptionally low running cost, and desirable and suitable internal layout and welcoming external street scene.

The Planning Group also places a high importance on the external design and landscaping of a development, improving this will have a positive impact on the surrounding community.

### **Resident Involvement in developing the Design Statement**

This design statement has been co-ordinated by Ambition Lawrence Weston, a resident led development trust. In putting this vision together we have:

- Carried out a door to door survey completed by 951 residents.
- Set up a planning group which has been meeting for four years (with more than 20 residents regularly attending meetings).
- Secured funding and advice from the Design Council CABE.
- Worked closely with the Neighbourhood Partnership and Bristol City Council Planning Department,
- Taken part in two workshops, delivered by the Design Council CABE, to better understand urban design in the context of Lawrence Weston.
- Attended other training events and visited other neighbourhoods.
- Consulted on the Vision at an open event attended by approximately 200 people including the elected mayor.
- Made it available during the six week consultation on the Lawrence Weston NDP.

## **URBAN DESIGN VISION**

That Lawrence Weston is a welcoming, safe and attractive neighbourhood that positively contributes to resident's confidence, wellbeing and pride. A neighbourhood of choice that helps create a stable, resourceful, active and engaged community.

- Creating a sustainable, well-designed, innovative and welcoming urban environment.
- Creating and enhancing formal and informal green spaces that are well used and well maintained.
- Investing in and improving our public realm so that is attractive, safe and clean.
- Designing and improve highways, cycle paths and footpaths to better link the neighbourhood with itself and beyond.
- Building a high quality community hub and enhancing existing community facilities.
- Ensuring that new developments promote a greater mix of tenure, community space where required and a focus on appropriate forms of housing of high quality and with good space standards.

## 1. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

1.1 One of the key characteristics of Lawrence Weston is its abundance of green space. The neighbourhood benefits from the proximity of both Blaise Castle and Kingsweston Estate with long views to mature woodland and the Estuary. The character of the neighbourhood is low density with green parks and verges which provide an attractive green environment, there are however improvements to be made. Despite a significant number of available play spaces and most require investment (see below).

### 1.2 Formal Children's Play Spaces

**"At the Blaise end of the estate we have no play facilities at all. I live in a flat and need somewhere where the children can play safely", resident (2 children), 30.**

The following areas are in need of new or improved children's play spaces;

- **Mancroft** – Recently improved but not well used. Requires better signage, additional and different play facilities and better surveillance.



- **Stradling Road** – Housing Land which is in a poor state and needs investment including new play equipment. It will also be important to include local resident families in the design, as well as the aftercare.

- **Beverston Garden** – Housing land which is currently underused. There is a need to better understand how this space could be used and what, if any, play equipment is required.

- **Green space near Hewland Court** – Residents would like to see facilities to play out, eat out and better use the space.

**Vincent Close** — These suggestions apply at the other end of the estate, to the green space around Vincent Close flats, including the contiguous green

space around the Long Cross flats. This is an almost 'sterile' slope, which, with thoughtful and creative design, should be made a much more interesting and welcoming, communally-useful, social and recreation space for adults as well as children. This should extend to naturally include the adjoining green spaces around Redwick and Goram Closes and the Stradling Road flats.

### 1.3 Informal Children's Play Spaces

**"I would like to see more at the BMX track. I would love there to be concrete skate ramps", resident, 12.**

**Henacre** – There is the potential for land forming, imaginative play, mazes and improved skate park. Any wooded equipment needs to be sufficiently overlooked or to be of a material which requires minimum maintenance.



### 1.4 Formal Green Space

**"In France there are lots of places for residents to stop, socialise and eat out doors. We need some picnic seating to encourage this", resident.**



**Ridingleaze Greenspace (left)** – Could be

improved with seating and picnic areas to the frontage of the retail area. With thoughtfully designed seating and tables for picnicking, a more interesting and welcoming outlook to the adjacent Ridingleaze shopping precinct would be created. Improvements to the public realm and streets can include seating and meeting places, particularly within more informal shared surface treatment on residential roads.

## 1.5 Incidental Places

**“We have an abundance of green space, but it is underused and not always well maintained”,  
*retired resident 63.***

**Other green spaces** – wide curtilage at the end of some streets, these are opportunities for planting of both herbaceous borders and new trees where visibility splays and infrastructure allow.



**Moorend Gardens – Community Event**

## 1.6 Growing Spaces



**“My crops have been ruined by the flooding. My neighbour lost his chickens recently due to flooding. It is no wonder that there are empty plots on the allotment site. It can be very disheartening”,  
*allotment holder and resident.***

Significant investment has been made in allotments in Bristol and the impact has been positive on both the rate of uptake and upkeep of the plots. BCC area standard is 7 plots per 1000 population, in each Neighbourhood Partnership Area, as indicated in the Bristol Allotment Strategy 2009-2019.

Currently the allotments in Lawrence Weston are located within the functional flood plain and there are flooding problems regularly. Improvements to the site and drainage have recently been made by a re-invigorated and enthusiastically effective Allotment Association with the help of Green Capital grants from Bristol Green Capital funds and from Bristol City Council Neighbourhood Partnership funds. Improved maintenance of the surrounding rhines by the Environment Agency has made a significant reduction to the frequency and severity of flooding. However, the site remains very wet and a challenge to gardeners perseverance and ingenuity, with raised beds and imported soil being a favourite solution when affordable. If there are still problems it may be necessary in negotiation with current plot holders to relocate to a dryer position.

- Allotments require better drainage, signage, storage and perimeter security.
- Potential to provide further allotments adjacent to the City Farm and/or relocate those within vulnerable areas prone to flooding to more appropriate location.
- Potential for shared growing spaces within the residential grounds at Lawrence Weston Farm, 5 Ways Bungalow, Henacre, Declifford/Longcross flats and Moorend gardens through the use of raised beds within communal spaces.



## 1.7 Amenity and Wildlife Space

**“Henacre open space is important for wildlife and we must look after this”, resident 54.**

**“I walk on the moor but I think most people wouldn’t know how to access it ”, resident 34.**

Within Bristol City Council’s Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Local Plan (SADMP) the perimeter of the neighbourhood is designated ‘Important Open Space’ to the south east and ‘Avonmouth and Kingsweston Levels’ to the north west. The wildlife areas within Lawrence Weston’s natural environment are important both from a visual amenity and a biodiversity perspective.

- Any development on Henacre needs to re-provide appropriate wildlife corridors and may enhance the area through additional habitat provision.
- Continued and improved maintenance and signage to Lawrence Weston Moors, and enhancement of biodiversity. Avon Wildlife Trust manage the Moor, and could be a potential partner. <http://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/lawrence-weston-moor>.
- Good maintenance and upkeep of the rhines.
- Better overlooking at the entrances to Henacre amenity space.



**Henacre Open Space**

Other areas of wildlife amenity space include the Lawrence Weston Greenway, the allotment site, Deering Close, Fernhill/Thirty Acre Wood and Greenhill Plantation.

## 2. COMMUNITY SPACE

**“There aren’t enough meeting places or spaces where city wide providers can deliver services to Lawrence Weston residents”** worker, 49.

**“We used to have a good library in Lawrence Weston, but they closed it”** resident, 18.

2.1 There is a strong community at Lawrence Weston and this requires the support of good quality social and community spaces to thrive. A new café and learning room at Lawrence Weston Farm has recently been provided. A number of initiatives have been identified that would provide a series of hubs for the residents over the long term including;

- Building improvements to the Youth and Community Centre(s).
- A bike hire and repair centre at the Lawrence Weston Farm or the BMX track.
- Further improvements to the BMX track with – seating, lighting, and drinking water – and concrete skate boarding ramps.
- A mountain bike trails track, well designed and located where annoyance to residents is avoided. Similar facilities for motor scrambler bikes may also be needed.
- Improvements and/or redevelopment of the Baptist Church adjacent to Henacre Open Space.
- New community building either on the former City College site or the existing clinic site, there needs to be a hub for community, health and education services and facilities.
- Informal recreational facilities such as 5-a-side pitches, to include sheltered and all-weather facilities.
- Small performance space and social gathering area, music studios, hobby workshops are other resources that would improve and widen opportunities for the community.



**Community Farm Lawrence Weston**

### 3. CHARACTER

#### 3.1 Existing settlement pattern and architecture

**“Lawrence Weston is amazing. I walk around the estate past council housing, a community farm, a BMX track, a 17<sup>th</sup> century farm house, Roman Ruins and a Grade 1 listed house designed by Sir John Vanbrugh! There are real treasures here that lots of people don’t know about”, *local worker 39*.**



**Visitors to the Roman Villa Site**

Much of the estate was built after the Second World War, some historical buildings predate this time particularly the old (17th century) farmhouses on Kings Weston Lane. The estate includes a Roman Villa and there are thought to be Roman ruins across the estate.

The majority of the buildings are 2 and 3 bed family housing in a mixture of terraced and semi-detached arrangements. They are of varying quality and construction some are precast concrete and others more traditional brick construction.

There are a few churches some of which are in good condition; Our Lady of the Rosary Roman Catholic Church in particular.

There are also a number of flatted blocks estates from the 1960's and 70's with extensive green open space. The highway pattern is traditional 6-7m carriageway on through roads, with large verges, pavements and houses set back from the roadway. Regular residential roads are normally under 5m, with narrow verges and a footway.

The neighbourhood is low density overall, but the character is generally of high density housing set in extensive communal areas. This can create localized problems of crowded on-street parking. New developments tending to be small scale in a mixture of styles; some traditional and some

contemporary. Bristol City Council BCC has cleared a number of the precast reinforced concrete (PRC) housing sites relocating residents to alternative housing within the neighbourhood (and beyond). This has left gap sites which have currently been enclosed by close boarded timber fencing.

The former secondary school (most recently a Further Education college) which occupies a central position both physically and visually at the heart of Lawrence Weston, is closed, the buildings demolished after years of community pressure, and the site neglected and derelict. In recent years, four out of the five pubs on the estate have closed, with the future of the fifth being uncertain, (re-opened after closure and offer for sale). Three of the four closures have been redeveloped as housing, while the fourth is in the process with a Housing Association.

The sites present an opportunity to improve the quality of new housing on a larger scale, and BCC have produced a detailed development brief for the former College site while residents have done a lot of work on developing ideas for the community hub required as part of this development.



**Terraced Housing (right) and Walk-up 2 bed flats (left), both typical of the post-war housing**

## 4. A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

### 4.1 Housing

**“We have so many flats, and we want more family housing to attract people to come and make this place their home”, *resident 48*.**

Housing tenure makes a significant impact on the community structure. There has been a focus on small family units and flatted development since the early days of the estate. The preference is for housing rather than flats as the residents would like to encourage families to stay in the area. The Lawrence Weston Housing Needs Report 2013 (jointly compiled by Ambition Lawrence Weston and BCC’s Landlord Services) should be referenced as part of any new developments.

- Focus on 2 and 3 bedroom family housing,
- Traditional massing and overall form – pitch roofs with potential for some contemporary layout, detailing and materials,
- Aiming for Passiv house standards, [the EnerPHit standard for renovations](#) and using renewable energy technologies to develop houses that have very low running costs,
- Housing developments to consider their relationship with the public realm – friendly, safe, pedestrian friendly, integrated parking and landscape design, space for refuse storage and recycling,
- Good connections between new developments and other parts of the neighbourhood – on foot, by bicycle, bus and car,
- Maintaining key views to Blaise Estates, Kingsweston House, Avonmouth Docks, and long views to the Estuary,
- Maximum 3 full stories with majority 2 story plus habitable roof space,
- The Building for Life 12 toolkit is used by the resident planning committee as a framework to respond to new development applications and BCC current space standards should inform housing design,
- Air quality within dwellings, and good soundproofing between linked dwellings are both essential to improve on current problem areas within existing housing.

**Defective PRC dwellings to be demolished (right), and (below) work is underway.**



**Right: New Dwellings are being built to higher standards – Mancroft Avenue.**



## 4.2 Retail and Commercial

**“The shops here are really expensive and if you haven’t got a car you are forced to pay high prices. A lot of people are on tight budgets and it is not right that we don’t have access to affordable food”, resident, 47.**

There is currently a lack of opportunities for employment in Lawrence Weston and few public transport links to neighbouring employment areas. Small scale commercial enterprises are encouraged which would bring needed employment and training opportunities into the area.



- Promote a better range of shops – limit/stop any more takeaways – policy of more community based shops including traditional retail offerings.
- Better signage and advertising, visual amenity still needs improvement.
- Better maintenance of the public realm and back of shops including any potential widening of the roadway to provide 45 degree parking places. This would ease congestion along the street and increase footfall.
- Consider better use of pavements in front of shops.
- Develop a workshop/affordable workspace for start-up business/artists – sites to be identified and should consider behind Ridingleaze, Henacre or new community facility.
- Secure cycle storage and bike racks in public places.
- Good links/paths to the retail centre, ensure new development on the College site supports links to Ridingleaze.
- Create transport hub, encouraging further use through increased accessibility of public transport.
- Better planning for deliveries (time, place).
- The BREEAM Excellent standard is encouraged for commercial buildings.



**Ridingleaze Shops, Lawrence Weston above, and proposed community hub below**



#### **4.3 Community Buildings**

**“We need a modern facility through which we can deliver much needed health services. Something high quality and inspirational. The residents deserve this”, local GP.**

Community buildings are the life blood of a place and provide essential services and social spaces. The following are design principles which help to ensure that the buildings have a long and functional design lifespan.

- Accessible buildings internally and externally for all ages and abilities,
- Light, airy and welcoming, with good environmental standards,
- Ensure new community facility is connected/or near Ridingleaze to provide additional footfall to retail centre and support other services,
- Secure cycle storage/ parking,
- Maintenance costs of new building considered/managed to ensure minimal repair and replacement,
- Local community ownership to ensure community have ownership and control of facility in perpetuity.

## 4.4 Street design and parking

**“The Garage site that was developed has created parking problems and wasn’t properly thought through. We need to consider parking carefully for future sites”, *worker*.**

4.4.1 The main streets in Lawrence Weston are wide and open. This means the streets are wider than would currently be developed in residential areas, and this, together with frequently long sightlines encourages faster vehicle speeds than the 20mph maximum that the city is now looking for.

4.4.2 Narrower residential streets frequently have problems of congested parking, damage to verges and front gardens given over to parking resulting in poor appearance of the street. Problems can be seen for example in the following locations:

- The Chapel Lane area where parking is already a cause of friction between neighbours.
- Parts of Lawrence Weston Road are in need of remodelling due to the creeping destruction of the roadside banking caused by parking. This could be remedied by remodelling the grass bank to allow 45° parking.
- In Deering Close, little amenity value is to be had due to ....?
- On Orlebar Gardens, the wide and pleasant greens are being destroyed by residents bringing their cars close to their front doors.
- On Saltmarsh Drive, car and pavement parking is a persistent complaint.
- The generous greens around Burycourt Close, Crokeswood Walk, are also being severely damaged by car usage.

4.4.3 Schemes that introduce re-modelling of the street to reduce maximum vehicle speeds will be encouraged, areas for socialising, tree and other planting, and integrated parking could all have a role to play in this street re-design.



**Junction narrowing and informal seating**



**Planting and parking used to create chicanes**

4.4.3 There is good parking in most areas in the neighbourhood, save Ridingleaze and a few other streets mentioned above. There are a number of parking problems that do need to be addressed including;

- ‘No parking’ areas to be enforced – casual grass verge parking is a problem,
- Design of new developments to encourage streets that can be used as play areas through a pedestrian priority design with landscape design included,
- Design of the highways; the neighbourhood would benefit from gateway markings into the area to signal that this is a residential neighbourhood. Currently, King Weston Lane is used as a through route with higher speed traffic. If development comes forward on Henacre additional highway intervention is needed at this gateway to Lawrence Weston to reduce traffic speeds and improve crossing,
- 45 degree parking on Ridingleaze and/or evaluating the feasibility of one way traffic– a public realm design that encourages people to stop and shop.



**Street access for vehicles can be very different**



**Tree planting can improve a traditional street.**



Above: Grass verges are often overrun by vehicles, making them unsightly and hard to walk on. Solutions can include the strategic use of bollards and other hard landscaping as well as tree-planting. There are also materials that can be laid under the surface to provide reinforcement, with the grass allowed to grow through.

#### 4.5 Legibility and wayfinding

Finding your way around Lawrence Weston can be difficult due to the lack of appropriate signage to key destinations. Lawrence Weston would benefit from a small amount of signage to key community, service and visitor destinations.

- signage at Kings Weston Lane to local shops and services,
- signposting to city farm,
- signposting to archeological and buildings of interest including Blaise, Roman Villa and Kings Weston House,
- signposting to the BMX track
- signposting to Lawrence Weston Moor



## 5. DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

The aim of this design guidance is to create a highly desirable, ‘liveable’ home having a buoyant, refreshing internal environment — sparking the response “I really enjoy being here”. These homes are to be complemented by a low-stress, convenient, pleasant and optimistic external landscape and street design — “It is really nice around here. I want to stay”. Engendering a positive commitment to the home and immediate area, and a desire to maintain and improve the immediate locality, will promote a neighbourly feeling of community and a common bond. This contrasts with the currently too often encountered ‘transient’ mindset in Lawrence Weston, that sees no value in improving your home or place, and the focus of any drive to improve the situation by finding something better elsewhere. We want this community now to be that “elsewhere”.

The following are a set of design principles that we consider would improve the overall design quality of developments;

- “Robust” housing detailing and material specification,
- Brick is the favoured material with potential for some contemporary design detailing and materials,
- We would encourage good design and innovative construction methods,
- Good space standards which promote family life –e.g. kitchens with tables for communal eating,
- Maximise daylight into habitable spaces, sunlight into gardens,
- Aspect and orientation to encourage passive and renewable energy production,
- Houses that meet good environmental standards,
- Design needs to be carried through to the landscape, parking and street design. Recent developments in some of the garage sites have lacked the welcoming aspects of some of the more traditional layout designs. Landscape opportunities with integrated parking is required.

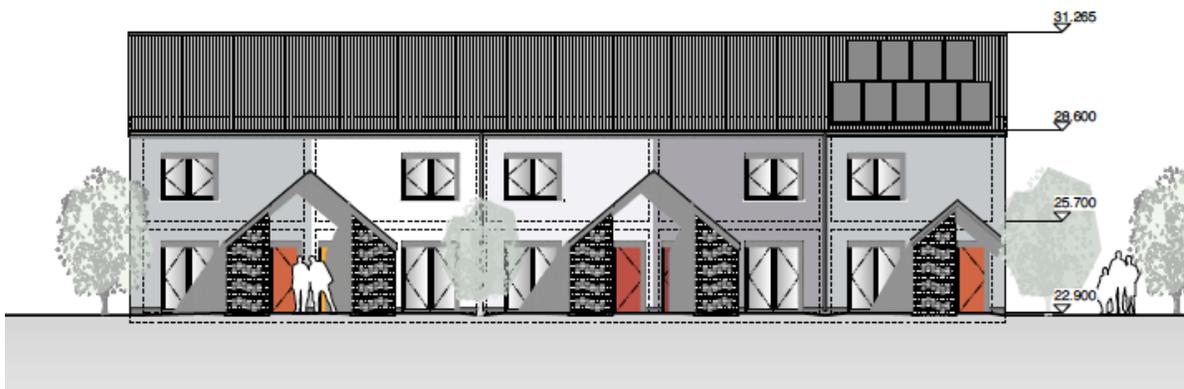


Illustration of Bristol City Council Passivhaus scheme: Image credit Gale and Snowden.

## 6. ENERGY EFFICIENT DESIGN AND GENERAL SUSTAINABILITY OF DWELLINGS

Our aspiration is to provide homes that are cheap to run and promote enjoyable, stress-free living. In an area of deprivation such as Lawrence Weston this is particularly important for residents as they cannot afford high energy and other bills. The provision of better than standard homes will also help to raise the desirability of the area; important in a neighbourhood which suffers from a poor reputation and a transient population.

This requires the following objectives to be met as far as possible:-

- That recycling storage facilities are well-designed and easy to use, and will not become an eyesore, (e.g. Quarry lane etc.). Dwellings need shelters to screen recycling containers.
- A high level of internal sound insulation be built-in to provide a desirable sense of privacy and low stress levels for residents, both between immediate neighbours and between the outside world and those inside.
- Design of public space and shared facilities within the development needs to encourage neighbourliness and the development of a local community shared responsibility.



- Water use within dwellings should be reduced and rainwater harvesting for internal and external use installed where possible.
- Good internal air quality is promoted, and space or facilities for natural drying of clothes.
- The design allows for adaptation to the householders' changing requirements as their lives progress, and facilitates a long term commitment to living in Lawrence Weston.
- Dwellings should be adaptable to the differing requirements of individual householders, low maintenance and of robust construction.
- Besides individual gardens; small allotment plots should be made available as part of larger developments to facilitate households wishing to expand their ability to grow their own food.



- Renewable energy and alternative fuel usage (wood-chip. bio-mass etc) should be installed where possible, and community power generation and CHP schemes considered and facilitated.
- Schemes to facilitate greater understanding of low-energy design among future householders should be explored in order to promote the most efficient usage of these facilities, and monitoring & feedback of their efficiency of use be undertaken.
- Easy storage for cycles should be available within properties.
- Car club or similar provision on new housing should be explored.



**View of Avonmouth Turbines from Lawrence Weston:** The Community welcomes proposals to develop commercial renewable energy both within and nearby in the Avonmouth industrial district. There is also significant potential for re-using heat from industrial processes within Lawrence Weston.

## **7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING**

### **7.1. Pre-application Consultation**

Bristol City Council's 'Statement of Community Involvement' October 2008, the Neighbourhood Plan and government policy all require the community to be involved before Planning Application stage for significant local development. This means that members of the community can talk to the developers and make them aware of issues that their community feel important in the area and with the proposed development, before any application is drawn up.

Residents are keen to have an active and positive dialogue with developers to the advantage of both parties. Currently this is through the Lawrence Weston Neighbourhood Planning Group who consult and involve residents through door knocking, leafleting, newsletters and website.

### **7.2. Planning process**

Residents wish to encourage an on-going positive dialogue with developers throughout the planning process through regular meetings and correspondence. Residents will comment on planning applications directly to developers and through the formal planning process.

### **7.3. Neighbourhood Planning**

Lawrence Weston is a designated Neighbourhood Planning area and has written a Neighbourhood Development plan (LWNDP) which references the need to comply with this document. The LWNDP requires major new development to have engaged in pre-application consultation.

### **Relevant documents**

- BCC Site Allocations and Development Management Policies 2015
- Lawrence Weston Community Plan: The Way Forward 2013-2023
- Former Lawrence Weston College Site Development Brief 2013
- Lawrence Weston Neighbourhood Plan 2015—2030
- Housing Needs Study 2013
- Bristol Allotments Strategy 2009-2019
- Building for Life 12
- BCC Statement of Community Involvement
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

**For further information please e-mail: [info@ambition-lw.org.uk](mailto:info@ambition-lw.org.uk) or write to Ambition Lawrence Weston, c/o Lawrence Weston Community Farm, Saltmarsh Drive, Lawrence Weston, Bristol, BS11 0NJ. Or visit [www.ambitionlw.org](http://www.ambitionlw.org)**