

ANNEX A - SWOT analysis of maintaining the existing Local Plan work programme

Option 1: Carry on preparing proposed revisions to the adopted Local Plan	
Strengths	Weaknesses
A five year housing land supply could be maintained. The current slightly increased housing need of 490 homes could be planned for. This would reduce the potential for planning appeals, the associated staff resource requirements and costs associated with appeals and the reputational risk of losing appeals.	Partially updated Local Plan will take until 2023/2024 to adopt
There is no guarantee that “Planning for the Future” White Paper will be enacted (work should continue until the government’s proposals are nearer to becoming reality).	The partial update could be obsolete before it is adopted. If this happens, significant parts of the preparation of the partial update would need to be written off as abortive work and both staff time and budgets would have been wasted.
Ensures implementation and delivery of the Council’s adopted planning policies and development strategy	New-style Local Plans will have to be prepared and adopted within 30 months of commencement. Waiting until “zero hour” before beginning preparation, and taking into account the unfamiliar nature of the new system, risks failure to meet very tight deadlines.
Maintains certainty about the Council’s planning policies and proposals, thus providing clarity to the development industry and public. People know where they are.	The Council is at the beginning of the revision process. The Council could apply the brakes now and change course without having expended a lot of resources.
Many aspects of the Local Plan are working well and don’t need updating or just need tweaking. This approach ensures continuity and improvement of tried and tested policies.	Drafting a new Local Plan from scratch that is “green to the core” is easier than retrofitting new strategic policy objectives into an established framework.
Avoids any delay should the planning reforms not come into force (i.e. there is no guarantee the White Paper or other national policy changes will be enacted).	
Opportunities	Threats
Directly addresses climate and ecological emergencies and other council objectives introduced since the Local Plan was adopted, and could increase delivery of affordable housing.	Reputational risk to the Council. Continuing to prepare a plan (and publicly consult on it) based on an outmoded system may be regarded by the public and development industry as foolhardy.
	A revised Local Plan that is based on a moribund or obsolete system will be more vulnerable to challenge at appeal

	and in the courts. Delay in bringing forward new-style Local Plan will exacerbate that threat.
	Obsolete Local Plan will be a potential threat to local sustainability due to predatory applications
	Fails to address proposed housing need (1,200+ homes p.a.)

Option 2: Pause the formal / regulatory plan making process until there is clarity on the White Paper and transitional arrangements from the old system to the new, and consequent change to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Allows the Council to hedge its bets. Preparatory plan- making activities continue but they are focussed on essential projects that are less affected by changes to the planning system.	The approach assumes that the White Paper either in full or parts will survive the transition to primary legislation. The White Paper has been received with scepticism across the board although the government continues to insist that it wants to significantly increase housing delivery.
The Council does not commit significant resources and finance to a programme of work that may become obsolete in 2021/22.	This approach delays the delivery of a partial update of the local plan and the desire to make the local plan green to the core.
Allows resources (in the short term) to be focused on corporate projects, such as the Cirencester Town Centre Masterplan and Sustainable Transport Strategy. These strategies have a bearing on the local plan (and its updates) as well as other corporate objectives such as the Investment Strategy, Economic Recovery Strategy; etc.	
Responds to known risks, such as the increased higher housing need. This will help the Council to identify and promote sustainable forms of planning. Evidence will also help to challenge speculative applications should the Council find itself unable to demonstrate sufficient land supply and/or rates of delivery.	
Ensures that the Council does not risk confusing the public or exhausting its goodwill through consulting on an	

updated Local Plan only to withdraw it before or shortly after adoption.	
Opportunities	Threats
To start a fresh. Build a new long term local plan that has the climate and ecological emergencies interwoven within the plan's vision and objectives.	The White Paper might not be translated in to primary and secondary legislation
Get ahead of the curve. Delivering strategic evidence before the new local plan 30 month timeline takes affect will help the Council to expedite the delivery of a new style local plan.	The Council is unable to progress to local plan to a sufficiently advanced stage to demonstrate sufficient supply of land for housing and /or sufficient rate of houses being built – increasing threat of speculative applications and planning by appeal.