



COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 SEPTEMBER 2020
Report Number	AGENDA ITEM 9
Subject	COTSWOLD DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN UPDATE
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr. Rachel Coxcoon - Cabinet Member for Planning Policy, Climate change and Energy Email: Rachel.coxcoon@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	James Brain, Forward Planning Manager Tel: 01285 623549 Email: james.brain@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To provide an update on the 'next steps' in the process of updating a local plan.
Annexes	ANNEX A: Planning for the Future consultation (Government White Paper) ¹ ANNEX B: Changes to the current planning system consultation ²
Recommendation/s	<i>To note the report</i>
Corporate priorities	<i>"to make the Local Plan green to its core"</i>
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	None

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

² www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system

BACKGROUND

1. A review of the adopted Cotswold District Local Plan (the Local Plan) was undertaken during the first half of 2020. The review concluded that a partial update of the Local Plan is required to ensure that it continues to remain robust up to the plan period 2031. This review was presented to members of Council on 3rd June 2020 (the Council report) and was unanimously agreed that a partial update of the Local Plan be carried out. The Local Plan Review is available on the Council's website via the committee pages or at section 9 of the report.

2. MAIN POINTS

2.1. The following section outlines the key documents, process and 'next steps' in the process of updating a local plan; a summary is provided at table one.

Table one: Local Plan update – current and next steps

Process / Document / Evidence	Status
Publish Local Development Scheme (LDS)	Cabinet / Council - Oct
Agree Terms of Reference for Local Plan and Cirencester Masterplan Programme Boards	Cabinet / Council - Oct
Review updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	Expected Autumn 20
Review National Modal Design Code	Expected Autumn 20
Publish Statement of Community Involvement	Cabinet / Council Nov
Approve Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground	Autumn to late 2020
Commission / Publish key evidence: Sustainability Appraisal scoping document Authority Monitor Report Residential and Employment Land Monitoring statistics Carbon Emergency Strategy Housing Land supply report Gloucestershire Housing Needs Assessment Gloucestershire Economic Needs Assessment Renewable Energy Strategy Cotswold District Green Infrastructure Strategy Gloucestershire LNP Natural Capital Mapping and Nature Recovery Network / Strategy Role and Function Settlement Study Cirencester Town Centre Masterplan Sustainable Transport Strategy Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Local Plan Viability Report Infrastructure Delivery Plan Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment	Completed early 2020 Published June 2020 Publish Sept 2020 Cabinet / Council - Sept Publish Sept 2020 Publish Sept 2020 Publish Sept 2020 Commission Sept 20 Publish Nov 2020 Expected 2021 To be confirmed (LDS ³) To be confirmed (LDS) To be confirmed (LDS) To be confirmed (LDS) To be confirmed (LDS) To be confirmed (LDS) To be confirmed (LDS)
Issues and Options consultation – a formal Local Plan making milestone	To be confirmed (LDS)

³ Local Development Scheme

2.2. Local Development Scheme (LDS)

- 2.2.1.** English local planning regulations⁴ place a requirement on Cotswold District Council to keep its LDS up to date. This document sets out the main local plan making milestones and includes the anticipated timings for each of the formal consultation stages, the submission of the local plan to the Planning Inspectorate, Examination in Public and finally adoption.
- 2.2.2.** An indicative timetable was provided in the Council report and in advance of the LDS. However, it was explained that this had not been subject to the rigours of the project management system and it does not factor in the effects of the Covid-19 emergency. The Council's LDS is currently being reviewed and an update will be presented to Cabinet in October 2020.
- 2.2.3.** The LDS timetable is subject to periodic review and milestones may change if, for example, significant additional issues are identified through the consultation process, national planning legislation reform and/or the review of the Council's evidence base.

2.3. Local Plan and Cirencester Masterplan Programme Boards

- 2.3.1.** Revised terms of reference for the Local Plan and Cirencester Town Centre Programme Boards will be presented to Cabinet in October. The principal role of both boards is to monitor the respective programmes of work and in particular to assess time, costs and risks of each project. The Boards' project management administration will be supported by the Forward Planning team's Project Officer.
- 2.3.2.** Cirencester Town Council is a member of the Masterplan Programme Board and reciprocal arrangements are in place with respect to the Town Council's Neighbourhood Planning Group. An update of the Board's Terms of Reference will provide timely reassurances to a key project partner.

2.4. Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

- 2.4.1.** Much like the LDS, the SCI is a requirement of the English local planning regulations and there is an expectation that this is kept up to date. The document sets out how the Council intends to consult and engage with local communities, businesses and stakeholders (statutory and non-statutory). Unlike previous editions the Council will need to set out how intends to undertake formal consultations in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the need for social distancing. The Council's SCI will be presented to Cabinet in November 2020.

2.5. Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground (GSoCG)

- 2.5.1.** The NPPF requires all local planning authorities to produce, maintain and keep up to date a Statement of Common Ground to highlight agreement on cross boundary strategic issues with neighbouring authorities and other relevant organisations.
- 2.5.2.** The Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC) reported and approved, at a meeting 3 June 2020, that the Strategic Planning Manager at Cheltenham Borough be tasked with assuming the duties of the Gloucestershire Spatial Planning Coordinator's role and to lead the Senior Planning Officers Group to deliver a draft Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground. A draft paper is expected to be available in late 2020.

⁴ The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/767/contents/made>

2.6. Commissioning Local Plan evidence

- 2.6.1.** Table one provides a summary of the key pieces of evidence that is due for commission and/or publication over the next 12 to 18 months. The LDS will set out a high level programme of work, including milestones and anticipated dates. Detailed project plans will be presented to the members of each Programme Board for review and monitoring at regular intervals.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1.** Financial implications are set out in the Council report in paragraphs 4.1 to 4.4. As part of the LDS / project planning process, officers are refining expected costings and these will feature in an update to the Council's Medium Term Financial Statement.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1.** Legal implications are presented at paragraphs 6.1 to 6.4 of the Council report.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1.** An assessment of the risks is presented at paragraphs 7.1 to 7.5 of the Council report. Since the Council meeting several matters have come into focus that will have a bearing on the local plan update. These can loosely be categorised into four themes: Covid19, the planning reform white paper and changes to the planning system; the economy and the forthcoming devolution white paper.

5.2. Covid19 Pandemic

- 5.2.1.** During the spring 2020 large parts of society and the UK economy was placed in to lockdown to help protect the NHS and the spread of the virus. Lockdown has been gradually lifted during the summer months although the England's chief medical officer announced in July we are reaching the limit in terms of easing further measures⁵. In recent weeks areas of northern England and the East Midlands have seen the return of more stringent lockdown measures resulting from local spikes in rates of infection.

- 5.2.2.** There have been notable changes to society in response to the pandemic, for example increased home working, reduced footfall in high street, changing shopping habits, altered commuting patterns, increased isolation, etc. and it is difficult to know whether these trends will endure once the pandemic has been controlled. The Local Plan making process will need to keep these trends under review and where possible identify measures that support local communities and business to prosper.

5.3. White Paper and changes to the current planning system

- 5.3.1.** Since the Council meeting, the government has presented a White Paper titled 'Planning for the Future' (the white paper)⁶ for consultation as well as a consultation of the 'Changes to the current planning system'⁷. A paper will be presented to Council in September summarising the two consultations together with responses to the respective questionnaires.

⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-53609896/chris-whitty-on-lockdown-easing-we-have-probably-reached-limit-of-what-we-can-do>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

⁷ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system

- 5.3.2.** The white paper proposes reforms of the planning system to streamline and modernise the planning process, bring a new focus to design and sustainability, improve the system of developer contributions to infrastructure, and ensure more land is available for development where it is needed. The consultation closes on 31 October 2020.
- 5.3.3.** The second consultation (Changes to the current planning system) closes on 1 Oct 2020 and seeks views on specific changes to the NPPF:
- a) changes to the standard method for assessing local housing need;
 - b) securing of First Homes through developer contributions in the short term until the transition to a new system;
 - c) supporting small and medium-sized builders by temporarily lifting the small sites threshold so developers do not need to contribute to affordable housing (to sites of 40 to 50+ dwellings). We assume this is done separately so they can implement this change shortly and will have major AH supply issues in rural areas like ours;
 - d) extending the current Permission in Principle to major development
- 5.3.4.** The white paper gives notification that the government intends to publish an update of the NPPF and publish a new National Model Design Code in the autumn months. Officers will review these changes and their implications to local plan making activities, Development Management process and other related established programmes of work.
- 5.3.5.** Proposed changes contained within the white paper require primary legislation before they can take effect.

5.4. The Economy

- 5.4.1.** The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has confirmed the decline in the second quarter of 2020 was widespread, with a significant drop in output across the services, production and construction industries taking the level of GDP back to the equivalent position in June 2003 (17 years ago). Jonathan Athow, ONS deputy statistician for economic statistics, said: “The recession brought on by the coronavirus pandemic has led to the biggest fall in quarterly GDP on record.
- 5.4.2.** Monthly economic figures indicate that the UK economy is recovering from the pandemic as lockdown measures have gradually relaxed and pent-up demand fuelled a rise in consumer spending. Jonathan Athow, confirmed that, “Despite this, GDP in June still remains a sixth below its level in February, before the virus struck.”⁸
- 5.4.3.** Predicting the longer-term impact that Covid-19 might have on the economy will be an important exercise to inform a wide range of disciplines, including land use planning. However, given the lack of precedent for a pandemic of this scale in modern times, forecasting future economic performance remains highly uncertain. A Gloucestershire wide assessment of long term economic needs is due to be published in autumn. The report will include commentary on the implications of Covid-19 and Brexit.
- 5.4.4.** The Council's annual statistical reports will continue monitor the delivery of new development including the Council's ability to maintain a robust five year housing land supply.

⁸ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/gdpmonthlyestimateuk/june2020>

5.5. Devolution White Paper

- 5.5.1.** The Devolution white paper is expected to be published during the autumn months at which point it will become apparent how devolution may affect local plan making in the medium to long term.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT (IF REQUIRED)

- 6.1.** Not required at this stage

7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS (IF REQUIRED)

- 7.1.** The Council has declared a climate emergency which commits the Council to prepare an action plan to show how it will support the District to become carbon neutral. The Council has also committed to make the Local Plan green to its core. An update to the Local Plan will directly support local communities and businesses to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1.** The June Council paper explained that the alternative is to not review the adopted Cotswold District Local Plan (2011 to 2031) until the fifth anniversary of its adoption in August 2023.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1.** The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:

- [Local Plan Review Council Report](#) to Council dated 3 June 2020 ([minutes of meeting](#))
 - ANNEX A - [PAS Toolkit Part 1: Local Plan Review Assessment](#);
 - ANNEX B - [PAS Toolkit Part 2: Local Plan Form & Content Checklist](#);
 - ANNEX C - [Cotswold District Local Plan Policy Review#](#)

- 9.2.** These documents are available for inspection via the Council's website and at the Council Offices during normal office hours for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting. Please contact the author of the report.