



**CABINET (SPECIAL MEETING)**

**4<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2014**

**AGENDA ITEM (3)**

**LOCAL PLAN REG. 18 CONSULTATION: DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND SITE ALLOCATIONS**

<b>Accountable Member</b>	Councillor NJW Parsons Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning
<b>Accountable Officer</b>	Chris Vickery Forward Planning Manager 01285 623544 chris.vickery@cotswold.gov.uk

<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To seek the Cabinet's approval of the consultation document detailing the development strategy; proposed site allocations; strategic policies; and introductory chapters.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>(a) That the consultation document attached at Appendix 'A' be considered;</p> <p>(b) that the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning be authorised to approve outstanding matters, including minor amendments to the consultation document, prior to the start of the public consultation period;</p> <p>(c) that, subject to any amendments made by the Cabinet, together with any minor amendments and/or updates, the consultation document be made available for public comment, together with the 'Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report to accompany the Local Plan Reg. 18 Consultation: Development Strategy and Site Allocations' and Habitat Regulations Assessment, for a period of six weeks, commencing in early January 2015.</p>
<b>Reason(s) for Recommendation(s)</b>	To enable the Cabinet to formally consider and approve the content of the document referred to above for public consultation.

<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	Beacon-Stow; Blockley; Bourton-on-the-Water; Campden-Vale; Cirencester (all Wards); Fairford; Kempsford-Lechlade; Moreton; Northleach; Rissingtons; Sandywell; Tetbury; Thames Head; and Water Park. Other wards may be affected indirectly.
<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes
<b>Recommendation to Council</b>	No

<b>Financial Implications</b>	<p>The only direct implication is the cost associated with printing and distributing the document, including the posting of flyers to residents of Cirencester, to raise awareness of the proposed strategic development to the south of Chesterton.</p> <p>These costs will be funded from the Local Development Framework earmarked reserve.</p>
<b>Legal and Human Rights Implications</b>	<p>None directly arising from this report – this will be an informal, rather than statutory, consultation exercise in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town &amp; Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012.</p>
<b>Environmental and Sustainability Implications</b>	<p>These implications are implicit in the proposals set out in the consultation document circulated as <b>Appendix ‘A’</b></p>
<b>Human Resource Implications</b>	<p>None directly arising from this report</p>
<b>Key Risks</b>	<p>The draft strategy, policies and proposals set out in the consultation document are based on extensive evidence gathering and analysis, which reflect the requirements of the latest national guidance and regulations on plan-making.</p> <p>In the absence of robust evidence, any amendments sought to the proposed contents of the Paper would present a risk of the Local Plan ultimately being deemed unsound at independent examination. This could affect part of, or the entire, submitted Plan, depending on the nature of the amendment(s) sought and the evidence put forward to support them. If any parts of the Plan were found to be unsound, there would inevitably be further delays in delivering a plan-led development strategy for the District, with longer term consequences for the five year housing land supply.</p> <p>All authorities are expected to use the most up-to-date evidence, wherever practicable, when preparing local plans. There is, however, no clear guidance explaining when or how evidence becomes sufficiently out-of-date to warrant refreshing. This is entirely a matter of judgement and, therefore, a potential risk.</p>
<b>Equalities Impact Assessment</b>	<p>The forthcoming consultation will be prepared in accordance with the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement, which was subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment. The Local Plan project as a whole is undertaking an Equalities Impact Assessment. These assessments highlight no issues.</p>
<b>Related Decisions</b>	<p>Cabinet 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013: Local Plan Development Strategy</p> <p>Cabinet 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013: Local Plan Consultation Paper: Preferred Development Strategy</p> <p>Portfolio Holder 21<sup>st</sup> March 2013: Switch from preparing Core Strategy to a comprehensive Local Plan.</p>

## Background Documents

The following are the key background documents, not an exhaustive list of evidence:

- (i) Evidence Paper: Development Strategy (CDC, November 2014)
- (ii) Evidence Paper: Housing (CDC, November 2014)
- (iii) The Objectively Assessed Housing Needs of Stroud, Forest of Dean and Cotswold (Neil McDonald with Christine Whitehead, October 2014)
- (iv) Evidence Paper to inform non-Strategic Housing and Employment Site Allocations (CDC, November 2014)
- (v) Evidence Paper to inform non-Strategic Housing and Employment Site Allocations: Appendices (CDC, November 2014)
- (vi) Addendum to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and Strategic Economic Land Availability Assessment May 2014 (November 2014)
- (vii) Cirencester Sports and Recreation Needs Analysis (Ploszajski Lynch Consulting Ltd, November 2014)
- (viii) Evidence Paper: Rural Housing Policy (CDC, November 2014)
- (ix) Supplement to Cotswold Economy Study 2012 and Economy Evidence Paper 2013 (CDC, November 2014)
- (x) Gypsy and Traveller – Identification of Potential Sites for Cotswold District (WS Planning & Architecture)
- (xi) Evidence Paper: Advisory Panel on Gypsy and Travellers Site Allocations Assessment (CDC, November 2014)
- (xii) Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report to accompany the Local Plan Reg. 18 Consultation: Development Strategy and Site Allocations (URS, November 2014)
- (xiii) Topic Paper: Local Plan Contextual Chapters (CDC, October 2014)
- (xiv) Study of Land Surrounding Key Settlements in Cotswold District Update (White Consultants, October 2014)
- (xv) Historic Environment Topic Paper - (CDC, July 2014)
- (xvi) Sequential Test - Draft Report (JBA Consulting, July 2014);
- (xvii) Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level Two (JBA Consulting, June 2014)
- (xviii) Minerals Local Plan Site Options and Draft Policy Consultation Document (June 2014)
- (xix) Strategic Employment Land Availability Assessment Viability Considerations (Hewdon Consulting, May 2014);
- (xx) Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and Strategic Economic Land Availability Assessment (CDC, May 2014)
- (xxi) Strategic Housing Market Assessment review (HDH Planning & Development, March 2014)
- (xxii) Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Viability Assessment (POS Enterprises, March 2014);
- (xxiii) Feedback from the Site Allocations Community

	<p>Engagement (conducted in March 2014)</p> <p>(xxiv) Local Plan Consultation Paper: Preferred Development Strategy Response Report (CDC)</p> <p>(xxv) Archaeology Review of Sites (GCC, January 2014)</p> <p>(xxvi) Biodiversity Assessment of Sites (GCER, November 2013)</p> <p>(xxvii) Gloucestershire County Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (Peter Brett Associates, October 2013)</p> <p>(xxviii) Local Plan Consultation Paper: Preferred Development Strategy (May 2013)</p> <p>(xxix) Local Plan: Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report (May 2013)</p> <p>(xxx) Infrastructure Delivery Plan: Interim Version (ARUP, May 2013)</p> <p>(xxxi) Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report (LUC, May 2013)</p> <p>(xxxii) Development Strategy Evidence Paper (CDC, April 2013)</p> <p>(xxxiii) Cotswold Economy Study (Peter Brett Associates, November 2012)</p> <p>(xxxiv) Report on Visioning Workshop – Land South West of Chesterton (ATLAS, October 2012)</p> <p>(xxxv) Role and Function of Settlements Study (CDC, July 2012)</p> <p>(xxxvi) LDF Core Strategy: Second Issues and Options Paper (CDC, December 2010)</p> <p>(xxxvii) LDF Core Strategy: Second Issues and Options Supporting Information (CDC, December 2010)</p>
<p><b>Appendices</b></p>	<p><b>Appendix 'A'</b> - Local Plan Reg. 18 Consultation: Development Strategy and Site Allocations - draft version</p> <p><b>Appendix 'B'</b> - Evidence Paper: Draft Development Strategy (November 2014)</p> <p><b>Appendix 'C'</b> - Evidence Paper: Housing (November 2014)</p> <p><b>Appendix 'D'</b> - Evidence Paper to inform non-Strategic Housing and Employment Site Allocations and Appendices (CDC, November 2014)</p> <p><b>Appendix 'E'</b> - Supplement to Cotswold Economy Study 2012 and Economy Evidence Paper 2013 (CDC, November 2014)</p> <p><b>Appendix 'F'</b> - Evidence Paper: Rural Housing Policy (CDC, November 2014)</p> <p><b>Appendix 'G'</b> - Evidence Paper: Advisory Panel on Gypsy and Travellers Site Allocations Assessment</p> <p><b>N.B. Appendices 'A' to 'G' have been circulated as separate documents</b></p> <p><b>Appendix 'H'</b> - extract from the Unconfirmed Minutes - Council Meeting - 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014 - Petition relating to Proposed Strategic Development Site at Chesterton, Cirencester</p> <p><b>Appendix 'I'</b> - Document addressing questions raised by the above-mentioned Petition</p>

## Background Information

1. The Preferred Development Strategy May 2013 (PDS) was published for consultation during June/ July 2013. The PDS set out, for the first time, a District housing requirement for the period 2011-2031 and the proposed distribution of housing to the District's most sustainable settlements. A report was subsequently produced, which provided responses to all of the resulting 2,000+ representations received on the PDS proposals. The Response Report is posted on the Council's Website along with all the other evidence that has been produced to support the emerging Local Plan.

2. A subsequent Cabinet report, dated 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013, explained the main points raised by the representations together with emerging new evidence. In considering the report, the Cabinet resolved that:

- the general thrust of the Local Plan Development Strategy should be maintained;
- Down Ampney should be included as one of the settlements where part of the District housing requirement to 2031 will be met;
- Officers will consider the scope for, and robustness of, including a windfalls element as part of the overall housing requirement;
- the indicative levels of housing proposed for settlements in the PDS be used to help inform community engagement events, subject to any amendments made necessary by further updated evidence.

3. The plan-making process is complex, iterative, and requires constant updating. This is necessary to ensure that all of the evidence underpinning the Local Plan is sufficiently robust and up-to-date to meet national requirements and, ultimately, that the Plan is declared 'sound' when tested at examination. Several critical evidence reports have emerged recently, relating to the revised District housing requirement and the distribution of housing and employment. The outcomes of these have been brought together into a Development Strategy Evidence Paper, November 2014 circulated as **Appendix 'B'**. The conclusions of the Evidence Paper, along with site allocations work (see paragraph 7 below), have largely formed the basis for the revised Development Strategy.

4. The District housing requirement arguably has the greatest overall influence on the shape of the Plan and, in particular, the Development Strategy. Work has been continuing over a prolonged period, in collaboration with housing and economy consultants, to produce an updated District housing requirement. Besides being based on the latest available evidence, it takes full account of other relevant factors, including the interim outcomes from the Stroud Local Plan examination. The Housing Evidence Paper (November 2014) circulated as **Appendix 'C'** explains, and brings together, the technical evidence supporting the resulting housing requirement. The conclusion of that work is a revised objectively assessed District housing requirement (2011-2031) of 7,500 dwellings. This amounts to a net increase of 600 over the 6,900 dwellings proposed in the PDS. Clearly, this additional requirement will have an impact both on the distribution levels across the District and the amount of land identified in specific settlements to deliver the development.

5. Work has been done to update the number of planning permissions granted since April 2013 (the date of the evidence which underpinned the PDS). To ensure that commitments to date have been taken fully into account, the Council's latest monitoring data have been used. The bottom line is that, since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 (the start of the Plan period) 4,858 dwellings have already been committed (built to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 and outstanding planning permissions up to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014). These commitments can be deducted from the District housing requirement to produce the approximate amount of housing remaining to be allocated.

6. Importantly, this data also reveals that the following settlements have already significantly exceeded the 'requirement' proposed by the PDS for the entire Plan period:

- Mickleton 186% (80 proposed/ 149 committed)
- Fairford 170% (260/ 442)
- Moreton-in-Marsh 158% (520/ 819)
- Cirencester 117% (860/1006)
- Tetbury 114% (650/ 739)
- Bourton-on-the-Water 109% (300/ 327)

7. The site allocations evidence paper circulated as **Appendix 'D'** explains in detail how Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) sites were evaluated for potential allocation in the identified settlements. The paper covered all potential sites except the Chesterton strategic site (see paragraph 9 below). The site allocations process involved taking account of numerous planning criteria; strategic objectives; sustainability appraisal; and, importantly, engagement with local communities. The latter provided local communities with an opportunity to advise the Council of their preferred and reserve SHLAA sites, having evaluated their respective planning merits. Some potential sites were deleted from consideration where deemed appropriate. This process concluded that about 530 dwellings could be delivered on preferred sites and about 760 dwellings on reserved sites.

8. Evidence demonstrates that, even if all of the preferred and reserve SHLAA sites were to be allocated, the District housing requirement could not be met unless a site of 'strategic' scale is also proposed. To date, outstanding planning permissions and completions since April 2011 amount to 4,845 dwellings. Adding these commitments to the estimated housing on all of the preferred SHLAA sites (531) produces a total of 5,386 dwellings. That figure is over 2,100 dwellings short of the revised objectively assessed housing requirement (7,500). There is too much uncertainty, at this stage, surrounding the prospects of reserve sites coming forward to rely on them delivering the housing requirement.

9. The planning arguments for allocating land south of Chesterton were set out in both the Second Issues & Options Paper/Supporting Information (December 2010) and the PDS. The Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report (May 2013), which accompanied the PDS, had appraised four strategic option areas around Cirencester, and concluded that Option 1 (land south of Chesterton) was the most sustainable option. That appraisal was undertaken even though no reasonable and available 'strategic' alternatives to the Chesterton site have emerged throughout the process (either at Cirencester or elsewhere). Further work has subsequently been commissioned to address salient points raised by objectors to the PDS proposals, including 'Points of the Compass Analysis' and 'Appraisal of Site Combinations around Cirencester' (both are incorporated into Background Document (xxii)). Having taken account of all material evidence to date - including many objections made in response to the PDS - Officers conclude that there are no compelling planning reasons for removing the Chesterton site, which remains critical to the success of delivering the Development Strategy.

10. Section 12 of **Appendix 'B'** explains the rationale for proposing a revised capacity of up to 2,350 dwellings; nine hectares of employment land; and other land set aside for community uses on the Chesterton site. It is possible that the number of dwellings could drop a little lower in due course as the further evidence is collected; including analysis of site surveys and highway capacity testing.

11. The absence of any other strategic options has rendered the need for community engagement to consider alternative sites unnecessary. Instead, efforts have focussed on seeking to get the best possible outcomes for the site through the consultation process and engagement with stakeholders.

12. A petition opposing the Proposed Strategic Development Site at Chesterton, Cirencester, was presented to the Council Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014. The content of the petition, and the supporting rationale, are set out below in paragraphs 20-27.

13. In taking forward the strategy, the delivery of housing has to be balanced with appropriate employment growth. To that end, the objectively assessed housing requirement took various demographic factors into account, including the District's ageing population. The resulting employment land requirement and distribution strategy reflects, and aims to deliver, the economic assumptions used in the housing requirement. Moreover, earlier economy evidence has been rigorously reviewed in the Supplement to the Cotswold Economy Study and Economy Evidence Paper 2013 circulated as **Appendix 'E'**.

14. The proposed Development Strategy has been revised to distribute at least 7,500 dwellings and approximately 28 hectares of B-class employment land over the period 2011 - 2031 in accordance with the table below. It should be noted that, although the District housing requirement has increased by a further 600 dwellings since the PDS was published, the proposed scale of development south of Chesterton has reduced marginally by 150 to 2,350 dwellings. The total housing comes out at 226 more than the District housing requirement. However, this is considered a robust position given that some of the sites may not come forward or others may ultimately deliver fewer dwellings than anticipated.

SETTLEMENTS	Housing			B-class employment (gross ha)
	Built since 2011 + extant planning permissions	Proposed through allocation	Total	
Cirencester – strategic site south of Chesterton	0	2,350	2350	9.10
Cirencester (excl. strategic site)	1006	31	1037	-
Andoversford	68	40	108	-
Blockley	8	51	59	-
Bourton-on-the-Water	327	10	337	3.38
Chipping Campden	81	127	208	0.67
Down Ampney	23	31	54	-
Fairford	442	0	442	-
Kemble	58	12	70	-
Lechlade	96	18	114	1.25
Mickleton	149	0	149	-
Moreton-in-Marsh	819	21	840	7.13
Northleach	43	53	96	-
South Cerney	155	0	155	-
Stow-on-the-Wold	91	30	121	-
Tetbury	739	27	766	6.74
Upper Rissington	394	0	394	-
Willesley	5	80	85	-
Other locations	341	-	341	-
<b>DISTRICT TOTALS</b>	<b>4845</b>	<b>2,881</b>	<b>7726</b>	<b>28.27</b>

15. The Council has robust evidence of the contribution that windfalls (unplanned sites) have made to the District's housing supply in recent years. From this, it has been concluded that sixty-nine dwellings p.a. can reasonably be expected to accrue from this source over the thirteen-year period 2018-2031 (897 dwellings). The rationale behind the calculation is explained in more detail in the Housing Evidence Paper. While the Council should not rely on windfalls helping to meet the objectively assessed housing requirement, they provide significant flexibility in the supply of housing should any of the commitments or preferred allocations fail to materialise within a reasonable timescale. Some windfalls may come forward in smaller settlements and, to help provide guidance on what would be acceptable, a specific policy has been developed on rural housing in collaboration with local communities and has been circulated as **Appendix 'F'**.

16. The Local Plan consultation document will be made available for public consultation over a six-week period commencing in early January 2015. Representations received during the consultation period will be taken into account in preparing the draft Local Plan, which will also include a full suite of development management policies.

17. The Gloucestershire County Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (October 2013) identified a need for twenty-six pitches in the Cotswold District to 2031. The Council has since commissioned a study to identify potential sites, which is nearing completion. Based on the draft recommendations of that study, an Advisory Panel Meeting was convened on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2014 to consider ten sites considered to have the greatest potential for meeting the future needs of the gypsy and travelling community. The resulting draft Advisory Panel evidence paper, circulated as **Appendix 'G'**, has yet to be finalised. However, it appears likely that the Council will be able to meet its identified need. Once the Panel evidence paper has been finalised, the proposed sites can be incorporated into the forthcoming Local Plan consultation document. If that evidence isn't available in time for the Cabinet's Meeting, it is recommended that the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning is authorised to approve the recommended sites for consultation purposes. This would be in accordance with Recommendation (b) of this report.

18. The *'Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report to accompany the draft Local Plan: Revised Development Strategy & Site Allocations'* (URS, November 2014) is required to accompany the draft Local Plan when it is made available for public consultation. The Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report, along with all other relevant background documents, is available to view both in the Members' Room and on the Council's Website.

19. Consultants are currently working on the latest Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report and this, too, will be available for public inspection when the consultation period commences.

20. A petition was presented to the Council Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014 relating to the Proposed Strategic Development Site at Chesterton, Cirencester.

21. The petition wording was as follows:-

*'We, the undersigned, believe that the Cotswold District Council plan for an extra 3,360 (39.2%) new homes in Cirencester will significantly damage our town, and will not be a proper solution to the need for more housing in the Cotswolds. We are dismayed at the dismissive response to more than 2,000 objections, including those of the Town Council, and demand that far more of the housing be allocated across the 450 square miles of the District, including brownfield sites rather than productive farmland.'*

22. The supporting rationale was as follows:-

*'Why is this important?*

*As part of the CDC's allocation of an extra 3,360 new homes in Cirencester their intention is to build an estate of 2,500 houses on the fields to the south west of Cirencester.*

*We believe Cirencester's residents have not been made fully aware of CDC's plans, which would fundamentally change the character of our market town.*



*Cirencester's population of 19,000 would be increased by nearly 40%*

*In contrast, other Cotswold towns will be proportionately much less developed, and most villages, despite their needs, will only have minimal, or no, new housing.*

*Focusing development on Cirencester, and specifically on one large site, risks dwarfing the existing historic town, and diminishing its distinctive character.*

*The distance from the planned estate to the town centre is too great to walk. Many will opt for the car, thereby exacerbating the existing traffic congestion and parking problems in the town.*

*Sustainable housing development should be distributed throughout the whole Cotswold region, and not disproportionately concentrated on one site in Cirencester'.*

23. In accordance with the Council's approved Local Petitions Scheme, the issue was the subject of a Council debate, as the petition contained more than the threshold number of signatories (850). The petition organiser and the Cabinet Member also made representations at the Meeting.
24. Following a full debate, the petition was noted, and referred to the Cabinet for consideration as part of its deliberations on the Local Plan.
25. A copy of the unconfirmed Council Minute (CL.16(1)) relating to the petition is attached at **Appendix 'H'**.
26. A number of related questions were also submitted by/through the petition organiser. The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning provided answers thereto, copies of which were circulated to all Members and were also available for those present at the Council Meeting. For ease of reference, a copy of the Q&A document is attached at **Appendix 'I'**.
27. The Cabinet is asked to have regard to the petition and the Council debate when reaching a decision on the Local Plan consultation document.

(END)