

PETITION RE PROPOSED STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SITE AT CHESTERTON, CIRENCESTER

A number of related questions have been submitted by/through the petition organiser, and the Cabinet Member, Councillor NJW Parsons, has provided answers thereto. The questions and answers are set out below.

1. What are the alternative sites CDC are considering before agreeing on Chesterton Farm?

'Earlier iterations of the plan-making process explored and evaluated numerous alternative strategies/potential sites and many of these were ruled out on sustainability or other planning grounds. Site allocations and development boundaries are currently being prepared for all 18 settlements identified in the Development Strategy. This includes alternative sites in and around Cirencester. The allocation of sites is primarily how the Council will demonstrate that the Local Plan Strategy can deliver the District's objectively assessed housing to 2031. Site allocations and development boundaries will feature in the document that Cabinet will be considering, in December, for public consultation.'

2. How do CDC plan to meet the Government target of 6,900 new homes imposed for the whole District if the site at Chesterton Farm does not proceed?

'There has been no evidence, to date, to suggest that land south of Chesterton cannot be developed; hence, time and resources have not been expended on developing a possible 'Plan B'. Suffice to say that other potential 'strategic' options were explored and assessed through sustainability appraisal, which concluded that Chesterton was the most sustainable area for this scale of development around Cirencester. The SHLAA, moreover, assessed that the Chesterton site is available, suitable and achievable. In order for the Plan to be sound, it is important that it proposes sites that are deliverable.'

3. What involvement, if any, will Earl Bathurst companies have in the development of the site that CDC are aware of?

'It is not known, at this stage, who would actually build any houses on this site. The landowner exercised his right to put forward this land for potential development when CDC issued a 'call for sites', which helped to inform the SHLAA process. The landowner has made a public commitment to achieve high quality development on this land, and has commissioned consultants to engage with the community on potential options.'

4. How will CDC ensure the public are kept informed of any outcomes of on-going re-evaluations? On-line not good enough.

'It's not clear why "online isn't good enough" provided it is supplemented by other methods of reaching those who are reluctant or unable to use online communication. CDC has always communicated using various media and will continue doing so with forthcoming consultations. For example, everyone who has expressed an interest in the Local Plan process, and provided their contact details, will receive either an email 'alert' or a letter in good time to respond to forthcoming consultations. This will be supplemented, as before, by other methods of communication, including Press releases, Cotswold News, and publicising documents via town/parish councils and libraries.'

- 5. Since roads, public transport, sewage, green space, parking, community facilities etc. are of concern within this development and hospital provision, schools, shopping, sport facilities etc. for the town in general, can it be confirmed that the community will be given an opportunity to contribute to this plan?**

'This has been happening over a number of years. The community, moreover, has already been given opportunities to contribute to the emerging Plan for land south of Chesterton, notably at the Preferred Development Strategy stage. Appendix 2, for example, had 8 pages which set out a draft vision and development objectives for the site, and many people submitted their ideas and comments. An Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) is being prepared alongside the emerging Local Plan, and this provides rolling, up-to-date evidence and advice from infrastructure providers, including the local education authority, water companies, highways authority, etc.'

- 6. Can assurances be made that using the Planning process under the Town and Country Act 1990 in relation of Planning obligations (S 106 Agreements) that where possible, and recognising that it may devalue the disposal value to the Landowner, that the developer will have obligations to provide suitable amenities to the development?**

'Yes, the Local Plan policy for Chesterton will set out the development requirements.'

- 7. Is Kingsmeadow a vision of good design? – We think not!! Kingsmeadow is characterised by WHAT IT IS NOT and there is a general view that it simply does not work. How will CDC ensure that the mistakes made will not be repeated once again?**

'It is presumed that this question relates to the Kingshill Meadow development rather than Kingsmeadow (Tesco, et al).

Everyone has their own view on what constitutes good design. However, Kingshill Meadow was one of just four projects to have received a CPRE Gloucestershire Award in 2013: *"The award was made for the planning, design and development of a major residential development that demonstrates the importance of creating visual quality that reflects the variety of residents' needs, and that has been successfully integrated with the urban fabric of Cirencester...Kingshill Meadow is a significant urban extension to Cirencester, the first sizable residential development to be considered for a Gloucestershire CPRE Award. Over 350 dwellings have been provided, both market and affordable, including 60 Extra Care units with communal facilities. Great care has been taken over design. Using materials appropriate in a Cotswold town, a restricted palate of building styles was adopted, and particular attention given to walls, fences, ground detailing and landscaping that helps create visual interest and a sense of a quality development."* The views of an august conservation body like CPRE on the design merits of a major residential extension must surely carry significant weight.

It is reasonable, moreover, to add that the overall quality of development in the District is dramatically better now than it was in the in the decades preceding the 1990s.'

- 8. The area of Cotswold District is an entity that should not be considered a natural housing market. For example, Cirencester is influenced far more by its location along the A417/A419 corridor and its proximity to The M4 and M5 and Bristol than its location in the Cotswolds. Moreover parts of the Cotswold District are influenced by Oxford, Reading and the South Midlands.**

'Very few local authorities have a natural housing market area because most are heavily influenced by (often complex) external factors.

Cotswold District has, for a number of years, been regarded as part of the Gloucestershire Housing Market Area and this was recently accepted at Stroud's (adjourned) Local Plan examination. Based on the Inspector's conclusions, the SHMA will now be based on Gloucestershire rather than the six districts within the County.'

- 9. Cotswold District has nine neighbouring authorities - Stroud, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, South Gloucestershire, Swindon, Stratford on Avon, Wychavon, Wiltshire and West Oxfordshire.**

Where there are planning issues which cross administrative boundaries, which is most definitely the case with current housing proposals, the council has a duty to work jointly together and co-operate with neighbouring authorities. Where is the evidence of this and has the council an up-to-date strategic housing market assessment based on this evidence compliant with NPPF?

'For absolute clarity, there is a tenth authority with a common border with this Council - the Vale of White Horse.

Duty to co-operate is a legal requirement and, to that end, the Council has engaged with neighbouring authorities and other relevant bodies over a considerable period of time. Evidence of meetings etc. are posted on the Council's website and this is updated periodically. There are several cross-boundary issues on which the Council has co-operated with neighbouring authorities, e.g. Cotswold Water Park; Aston Down airfield; Gloucester and Cheltenham Green Belt; and Lorries in the Vale of Evesham. However, regarding current housing proposals, there are no cross-boundary issues because the Council is confident that the district's objectively assessed needs can be met within its own boundaries. None of our neighbouring authorities currently anticipates approaching Cotswold to accept any of their housing needs either.

CDC has co-operated in producing a considerable amount of joint evidence with the other Gloucestershire authorities, including SHMA, SFRA, IDP and Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment. There is a County-wide evidence base covering other matters on which the Gloucestershire authorities have engaged in joint working and co-operation.'

(END)