



Minutes of a meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 5 November 2025

Members present:

Gina Blomefield (Chair)	Angus Jenkinson (Vice Chair)	Clare Turner
Tony Slater	Michael Vann	Ian Watson
Lisa Spivey	Ray Brassington	David Fowles

Officers present:

Helen Martin, Director of Communities and Place	Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services
Geraldine LeCointe, Assistant Director - Planning Services	Julia Gibson, Democratic Services Officer
Matthew Britton, Principal Planning Policy Officer	Tyler Jardine, Trainee Democratic Services Officer

Observers:

Councillors Mike Evely and Juliet Layton.

OS.241 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Jon Wareing, David Cunningham, Joe Harris and Nick Bridges.

OS.242 Substitute Members

Councillor Ray Brassington substituted for Councillor Nick Bridges, Councillor Ian Watson substituted for Councillor Joe Harris and Councillor David Fowles substituted for Councillor David Cunningham.

OS.243 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

OS.244 Public Questions

Mr David Hindle welcomed adherence to the Regulation 18 timeline and supported increasing residential density. They expressed concern about including post-2043 strategic site figures, noting that future allocations would be determined by a successor

authority, and highlighted that the local plan covered 15–20 years, not 30. They also observed that, due to landscape and sustainability constraints, the existing Cotswold District Council (CDC) area would be likely to receive less than its proportionate share of residential growth under the forthcoming Spatial Development Strategy.

The officer replied to the question that while the Council may wish to have a local plan in place in advance, the new authority would take primacy in developing the spatial development strategy, with up to five years after vesting day to do so. They noted that preparing the plan now provided control and a legacy for the transition, ensuring that development would be planned, sustainable, and supported by the necessary infrastructure, rather than allowing piecemeal speculative development.

OS.245 Member Questions

There were no Member Questions asked.

OS.246 Cotswold District Council Local Plan Review Preferred Options November 2025

The purpose of the report was to seek approval to include an addition to the consultation document for the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation on Preferred Options for Development, and to amend the consultation dates.

The report was introduced by Councillor Mike Every, Leader of the Council and Helen Martin, Director of Communities and Place. They raised the following points:

- Indicative housing numbers beyond 2043 were proposed as planning for larger strategic sites over a longer timeframe provided greater certainty for the delivery of necessary infrastructure.
- The National Planning Policy Framework recommended that larger sites should have a 30-year vision for development.
- Including indicative numbers at this stage promoted transparency and allowed for early engagement and comment from members and communities.
- The figures were purely indicative, not formal site allocations, and did not alter the preferred development scenario.
- These numbers were based on current evidence and would be refined following further assessment of transport, landscape, and other constraints.

In questioning and discussion, the following points were noted:

- Concerns were raised about holding the consultation just before Christmas and whether the timetable could be altered or better explained to residents. The officer advised that, although the consultation had been extended from six to seven weeks, the overall timetable could not change because the plan must be submitted by the end of 2026 and adopted by the end of 2027. Keeping to this

schedule was essential to maintain an up-to-date plan, avoid speculative development, and prevent potential government intervention.

- It was explained that the term “indicative” could be introduced earlier in the document to clarify that the current site figures were preliminary and subject to change. The figures were based on sites considered potentially deliverable, but further evidence, due diligence, and a new call for sites may affect availability. Once all local sites had been assessed, the Council would engage neighbouring authorities under the duty to cooperate, to see if they could assist in delivering homes. The final housing figure in the local plan would reflect what could be delivered locally and by neighbouring authorities. The inspector may approve a different figure supported by evidence.
- The Council was working within government housing targets whilst challenging them and emphasised that communications included exhibitions, information to households, meetings with Town and Parish clerks, and updates via social media to help residents understand how the targets had been set and the Council’s position.
- The site described as “near Driffild” referred to a new settlement rather than an extension of the existing village.
- Whilst the aim was to make new homes as environmentally sustainable as possible, delivering nearly 20,000 houses could not be entirely “green,”. The principle of “green to the core” applied not only to the developments but also to the policies within the plan.
- Whilst the density level could support sustainable development, the District’s character meant that the highest density may not always be appropriate. However, well-located higher-density development could be preferable to dispersed low-density housing.
- Developers would need to demonstrate how required infrastructure could be delivered at the planning application stage. An Infrastructure Delivery Plan would accompany the local plan, setting out the infrastructure needed to support growing communities. Developers would be required, through various mechanisms, to contribute to or deliver this infrastructure as developments proceed.
- To assist residents in responding to the consultation, material considerations were factors of public interest that could be taken into account in planning applications or local plans. These included national and local policy, impacts on amenity (such as noise, privacy, and visual effects), highway safety, heritage and conservation, environmental impacts (including flooding, biodiversity, air quality, and climate change), and potential benefits such as job creation, regeneration, investment, or provision of affordable housing.
- Scenario six was the only one in the document that potentially met the Government housing target but would require extensive development in the national landscape, which was contrary to national policy. Scenario seven included development on all sites that had so far been assessed as unsuitable for development.

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- The upcoming consultation would include a further call for sites, encouraging submission of any new sites or updated information on existing sites, including changes in availability or use.
- This consultation was the first stage, with a second consultation planned next summer that will focus on specific sites.

Councillor Tony Slater left the meeting and did not return 15:05

- Inconsistencies in the consultation document, where some figures included existing developments and others did not, could cause confusion when calculating percentages. It was suggested that the total level of growth for each community should be clearly presented at each stage of the plan.
- "Sustainability" referred to a settlement's existing facilities and transport links, which determined its capacity to support growth, and may be reassessed as infrastructure and site allocations were confirmed.
- A Member noted that development was constrained in parishes completely surrounded by the Cotswold National Landscape, while neighbouring wards with fewer restrictions had experienced more growth.
- Consideration of employment opportunities alongside housing was currently limited in the consultation document, as the focus at this stage was on housing. Section 4.3 addressed economic, employment, and commercial development, and the forthcoming housing and employment needs assessment and town centre study would provide the evidence needed to plan for jobs alongside new housing, particularly in areas with limited employment and transport options.
- The Council sought to ensure vital infrastructure was delivered through early engagement with the County Council, including Gloucestershire Highways, and by involving them in both planning applications and the local plan process. Ongoing dialogue continued to address issues experienced on previous developments.
- Clarification was requested on the figures behind the pie charts, as the charts showed proportions but not actual numbers. The officer noted the comment and agreed to consider how to represent the data more clearly.
- A column showing existing planning permissions alongside targets had been considered to clarify the figures for residents, and the wording was noted as potentially reviewable to ensure the information was as clear as possible.
- Early engagement with neighbouring authorities was already taking place, and it was noted that the Council needed to demonstrate where it could not meet its targets as part of the process.
- The current local plan would remain in place until the successor unitary authority produced a spatial plan, which could take up to five years. It was emphasised that maintaining the plan prevented speculative development and ensured essential infrastructure was delivered. Sites without adequate utilities or infrastructure were noted as not being considered deliverable.

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- Members expressed concern that while significant housing growth was planned for Cirencester, on top of existing development, the local hospital was actually reducing capacity and services.
- Concerns were raised about the consultation timing. In response, it was explained that the period had to remain as proposed, as the team needed adequate time afterwards to review all representations, report on them, and determine whether any changes were required for the next stage of the plan.
- Work on the strategic flood risk assessment and water cycle study was already underway, and recent discussions with consultants and the Environment Agency confirmed that the timescales were extremely tight. It was emphasised that adding more resources would not speed up this specialist work.

Councillors expressed strong opposition to the level of housing growth that was being imposed by central government, stating that they believed it was fundamentally wrong for the Cotswolds. They argued that the proposed development would cover areas outside of the Cotswolds National Landscape and described the approach as inappropriate at every level.

The Committee considered the wording of a recommendation to Cabinet on the need for clear communication in relation to the Local Plan.

Recommendation:

That the Council clearly communicates to town and parish councils and the wider public:

- a) The importance of getting a local plan in place at the earliest opportunity in order to manage development appropriately and to prevent piecemeal speculative development (which won't provide supporting infrastructure);
- b) Why the local plan timeline is fixed and the Regulation 18 consultation cannot be extended;
- c) How respondents can make valid contributions and what the material planning considerations are in relation to the Local Plan.

Councillor Ray Brassington proposed supporting the recommendations in the Cotswold District Council Local Plan Review Preferred Options November 2025 and submitting the above recommendation to Cabinet. Councillor Gina Blomefield seconded the proposal which was put to the vote and agreed by the Committee.

Voting Record.

For = 8, Against = 0, Abstain = 0

RESOLVED: to NOTE the Cotswold District Council Local Plan Review Preferred Options November 2025 and submit recommendations to Cabinet.

The Meeting commenced at 2.05 pm and closed at 4.00 pm