

Some people have correctly pointed out that part of the site is on grade 2 agricultural land and this is a consideration which has been taken into account. However, this loss amounts to just 0.63% of the total in the District and this is considered to be outweighed by the benefits of providing homes, jobs, services and facilities to meet future needs.

The land south of Chesterton has real potential to deliver a well-designed, natural and sustainable extension to Cirencester, as set out in the vision and development objectives. To ensure that a high quality extension to the town is delivered, we will be working collaboratively with Cirencester Town Council, the local landowner and residents of the town to help shape the Master Plan framework for the new development. We see this as vital to achieve the best outcomes for the town.

The new community will become an integral part of Cirencester and will be developed incrementally and in a well-planned way over the next 15 years or so. This will allow time for it to evolve gradually on a phased basis with the necessary infrastructure in place, including: highway and drainage works; new educational and recreational facilities; suitable employment opportunities; the provision of open space and green infrastructure; and improved connections to the town centre.

Understandably some people have queried whether sufficient 'brownfield' land has been identified to meet the housing requirement – we have explored every available brownfield site across the District to test its suitability for new development and have prioritised these wherever possible.

Although 700 more houses have had to be added to the District requirement, the number of dwellings proposed south of Chesterton has not increased. In fact, the number has reduced to 2,350 in response to emerging work on the Master Plan, the final version of which will ultimately determine the capacity of the site.

How to comment

The latest consultation exercise will begin on Friday 16 January and last for 6 weeks, ending on Friday 27 February 2015. The consultation document can be viewed online at www.cotswold.gov.uk/go/ForwardPlanning

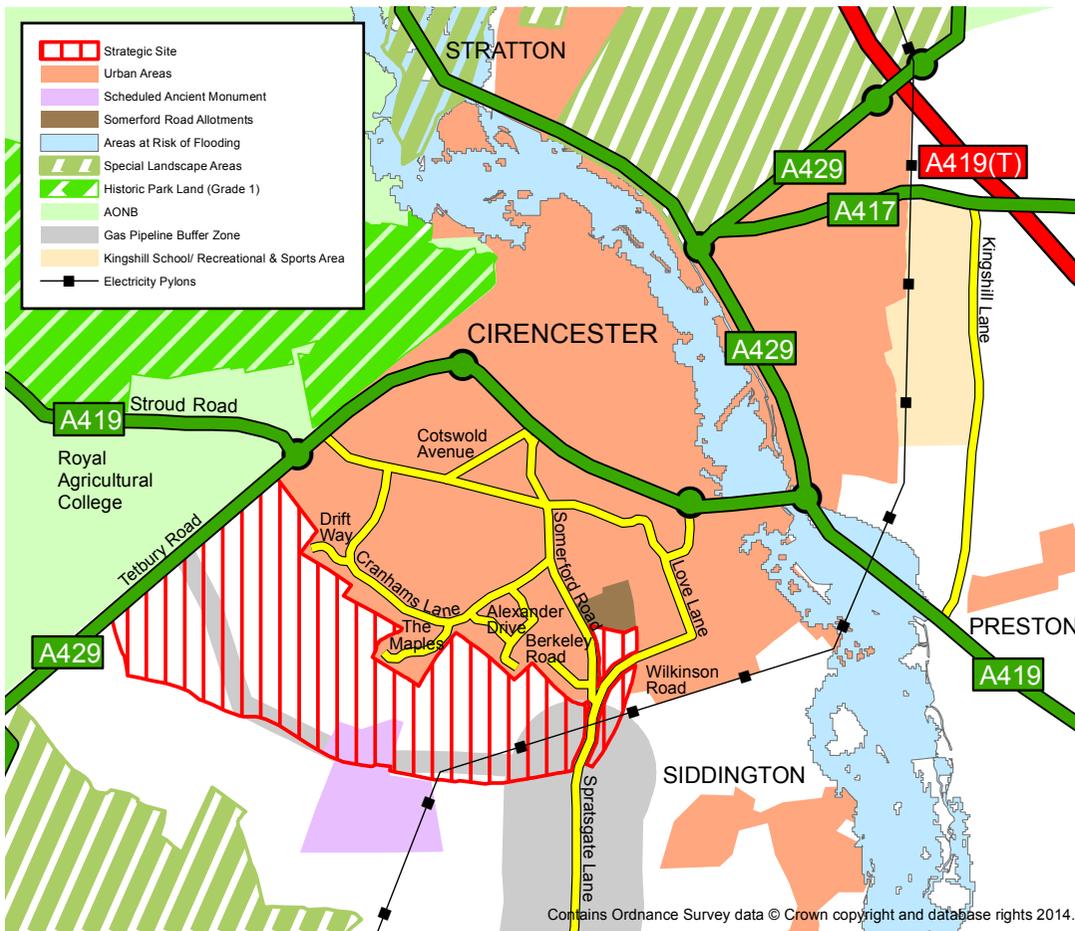
- The most effective and direct way to comment will be via the online bespoke system on our website.
- You will also be able to email your comments to localplan@cotswold.gov.uk
- Comments must be supported by evidence to carry any weight and help inform the plan. Copies of all the relevant evidence produced by the Council will be made available on our web site for you to review and, perhaps, challenge with your own evidence. However, please remember that any representations must refer directly to the relevant part(s) of the consultation document.

Hard copies of the consultation document will be sent to all District Councillors and Parish and Town Councils.

Copies will be available for inspection or purchase (£5 per copy) at the Council's Trinity Road office and our Moreton Area Centre. The document will also be available at local libraries across the District.

FUTURE GROWTH OF CIRENCESTER





Cotswold District's Housing Requirement

Our latest evidence indicates that the total number of new homes required in the District to 2031 is estimated at 7,600 (an increase of some 700 dwellings over the 6,900 requirement proposed in our Preferred Development Strategy (May 2013)).

Having established the housing requirement, it is necessary to distribute site-specific allocations to the right places. Detailed assessments and evaluation criteria have identified the 17 most sustainable settlements in the District, of which Cirencester is, by a very considerable margin, the key location.

Cirencester – what it offers

Cirencester is the District's main centre for housing, employment, retailing and facilities, and it serves a very wide area. With a strong sense of community and a growing economy, the town has a remarkable history, heritage and culture, all of which contribute to its pre-eminent role. Cirencester is by far the largest town in the District being over three times the size of Tetbury and more than five times the size of Moreton-in-Marsh.

When compared with any other settlements in the District, a far greater proportion of residents in Cirencester live near their work place, and there is every reason to expect this trend would continue. The town, moreover, has by far the greatest demand and need for housing in the District and so the Plan makes provision to meet that identified need. The Local Plan's distribution strategy allocates to Cirencester the right number and fair share of new housing, which will support its important position in the District. In 2011, 35% of the housing stock in the 17 most sustainable settlements was located in Cirencester; by 2031, that figure will have risen marginally to 37%. Many other settlements in the District have already seen substantial increases in housing numbers.

Having tested many options for delivering the required amount of housing for Cirencester, our evidence confirms that a strategic site is the right solution. Detailed technical studies will also ensure that the impact of the development is properly addressed, including the provision of appropriate infrastructure, services and community facilities. The detailed policy requirements and vision for the site will be set out in the forthcoming consultation document, 'Local Plan Reg. 18 Consultation: Development Strategy and Site Allocations', which we urge you to read in order to fully understand the implications of this key proposal.

Cirencester (unlike 80% of the District) is not within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and none of the surrounding land is designated as green belt; therefore, the town performs well on these key sustainability measures.

Why develop south of Chesterton?

The planning reasons for proposing development on land south of Chesterton were set out in two earlier consultation documents. Further independent appraisal work has confirmed that this area of land is the most suitable option for accommodating development and that the site is available and deliverable, which is a fundamental test of the proposal's 'soundness'. Amongst its advantages are:

- it adjoins Cirencester's built-up area
- it is not affected by, or within, an area of flood risk
- it is not affected by, or within, any biodiversity designations
- development here would not lead to Cirencester 'joining up' with any neighbouring villages
- no fundamental bars to development have been identified by infrastructure providers, including the Highways Authority
- the land is available and has been assessed as deliverable
- no other sites of a significant scale have come forward in or around Cirencester
- the constraints that do exist include a gas pipeline, electricity pylons and archaeology and, whilst they restrict the developable, area they do not prevent development.

FUTURE GROWTH OF CIRENCESTER

A new Local Plan to 2031

The Cotswold District Local Plan is a key policy document. Once approved by an independent Government Inspector, the new Plan will guide decisions on the use of land in our District up to 2031 and will be the main defence for resisting planning applications for speculative development across the District – that is why we need it to be in place as soon as possible.

Recent legislative changes mean that national planning policy can now override decisions made by Councils that do not have an approved up-to-date comprehensive Local Plan. Currently, only four local authority areas in England (out of the 336) comply with this requirement so the challenges facing Cotswold District are shared by the majority of other local authorities. To ensure that a Local Plan is approved, it must conform with prescribed and onerous national guidelines; otherwise it will fail tests of 'soundness' when it is examined. In particular, the Plan must:

- significantly boost the supply of housing and meet the objectively assessed housing needs for the area;
- be informed by up-to-date and robust evidence;
- include a strategy for delivering new housing and employment requirements, supported by the necessary infrastructure, in the most sustainable locations.