



1. The Local Plan & its importance

What is a Local Plan?

It's a legal document that sets out how land in the district should be used over the next 15+ years. It guides decisions on housing, employment, infrastructure, and environmental protection. It's the starting point for deciding planning applications.

Why does it matter?

It affects where new homes, schools, roads, and businesses go — and where development is restricted. Without an up-to-date plan, the council has less control over development.

Why is the plan being updated now?

As part of its national drive to build 1.5 million homes by the end of this parliament, the Government has more than doubled the number of homes Cotswold District Council needs to plan for – from 493 to 1,036 per year. The new plan must run to 2043 and reflect this.

How can residents take part in the consultation?

The consultation will open on Friday 14 November 2025.

Residents can take part by going to our website: your.cotswold.gov.uk We would encourage all residents to have their say online as this will speed up the analysis process, however for those unable to do that, hard copies will be available to view at the council offices at libraries and Council Offices in Cirencester and Moreton-in-Marsh and representations can be made by email (Local.Plan@cotswold.gov.uk) or letter (Planning Policy, Cotswold District Council, Trinity Road, Cirencester, GL7 1PX).

The consultation will close at 11.59 pm on 2 January 2026.

Exhibitions

We're hosting exhibitions for residents to have the chance to come and speak planners directly and gain a further understanding of the proposals:

- **Friday 28th November, 2pm - 7pm**, King George's Hall, Mickleton, Chapel Lane, Mickleton GL55 6SU.
- **Friday 5th December, 2pm - 7pm**, St David's Centre, St. David's Church, Church Street, Moreton-in-Marsh GL56 0LT.
- **Thursday 11th December, 2pm - 7pm**, Fairford Community Centre, High Street, Fairford, Gloucestershire GL7 4AF.
- **Thursday 18th December, 2pm – 7pm**, Corinium Museum, Cirencester, Park Street, Cirencester GL7 2BX.

2. Changes since the last consultation

What was consulted on before?

In 2022, the Council consulted on which issues and options the Local Plan should address, including the key challenges and opportunities facing the district. In early 2024, the Council asked for views on a new vision, objectives, and several development strategy options to deliver the former (now superseded) housing target. It also consulted on policies to make the plan “Green to the Core.”

What is the impact of the new housing target?

The district must now plan for 18,650 homes up to 2043. The significantly increased housing target also means the district no longer has a five-year housing land supply, meaning the Council can't easily refuse speculative applications for housing developments – even in areas that were previously considered to be unsuitable. This is due to national policy giving a presumption for approval unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, this is known as the tilted balance.

3. This consultation

What is Regulation 18?

The Regulation 18 consultation is an early stage of consultation where the Council shares its preferred development strategy and other emerging evidence and invites feedback. Specific sites will be proposed later in the Regulation 19 consultation which will be held next year.

How can you take part?

The easiest way to take part is online at your.cotswold.gov.uk. However, people can also view the document in person at libraries and council offices and make a representation by email (Local.Plan@cotswold.gov.uk) or letter (Planning Policy, Cotswold District Council, Trinity Road, Cirencester, GL7 1PX). Please ensure to clearly state for each of your comments which chapter/paragraph of the consultation they relate to; this ensures that your comments are processed swiftly and correctly. Deadline: **11.59 pm on 2 January 2026**. The Council will be thoroughly promoting opportunities for residents to learn more and take part in the consultation, including at our four in-person exhibitions (see above).

What happens to your feedback?

Your feedback helps shape the next version of the plan. It will be most helpful to get your comments on matters of public interest, such as issues around highways or environmental impacts, economic benefits, affordable housing need and community facilities, and so on. Representations ideally should focus on these sorts of planning issues as officers can only consider these ‘material planning considerations’ when updating the draft Local Plan.

After the consultation ends, all comments will be reviewed and used to inform the next draft of the Local Plan. This will be published in Summer 2026 and will also look at what infrastructure is required to support proposed development. At that point, the Council will

ask for views from residents again, which will inform the final draft of the plan before it is set to be independently examined by the Planning Inspector. If it passes legal and planning tests, it can then be officially adopted by the Council.

4. The development strategy options

What are the seven scenarios?

They range from focusing growth in existing settlements to creating new ones. Here's a summary:

Scenario	Approach	Estimated Homes Delivered	% of Target
1	Focus on existing settlements	7,840	42%
2	Add dispersed rural growth	8,230	44%
3	Focus on main service centres	9,420	51%
4	Growth near transport hubs	9,190	49%
5	Scenario 1 + new settlements/extensions	14,660	79%
6	Include protected landscapes	19,320	104% (Not viable)
7	Maximise growth incl. unsuitable sites	16,200	87% (Not viable)

Which option does the Council prefer?

Scenario 5 – It builds on the current Local Plan strategy and adds new settlements or strategic extensions. It delivers the most homes in a sustainable way.

Why not choose Scenario 6 or 7?

They involve development in protected landscapes or unsuitable areas, which would be against national policy and unlikely to be approved.

5. Understanding the figures

What do the numbers in each scenario mean?

Each scenario estimates how many homes could be delivered between 2025 and 2043 based on different development strategies. These figures are indicative, meaning they are not final and may change as more evidence is gathered.

How have these numbers been reached?

The figures for each scenario are high level estimates of what could be delivered over the Local Plan period, based on current planning permissions / allocations, windfalls and further sites that have been put forward and identified as potentially deliverable.

Why are they indicative?

- Site assessments are still ongoing.
- Some sites may be ruled out due to constraints (e.g. flooding, landscape sensitivity).
- New sites may be submitted through the current Call for Sites.
- Infrastructure feasibility (e.g. water, roads) may affect deliverability.
- The figures assume certain densities that may not be achievable everywhere.

Why doesn't any viable scenario meet the full target?

Because of planning constraints like:

- Protected landscapes (e.g. Cotswolds National Landscape)
- Infrastructure limitations
- Larger sites taking a long time for construction to start and the overall completion expected to be well after 2043 (we can only count homes that are completed by 2043 against the Local Plan housing requirement)
- Site viability and deliverability
- Community impact and sustainability concerns

6. What does "indicative" mean?

What do these numbers mean?

They are a starting point for discussion – e.g., the final numbers will depend on:

- Detailed site assessments
- Infrastructure studies
- Feedback from this consultation
- Future planning decisions

Could the numbers go up or down?

Yes. For example:

- If more sites are found to be suitable, numbers may increase.
- If infrastructure constraints prevent development, numbers may decrease.

7. The risk of under-delivery

What happens if the Council doesn't meet its housing target?

National policy requires all councils to deliver their housing and other development targets as a minimum. The government has instructed all local planning

authorities to exhaust all options to deliver these targets for the Local Plan to pass its independent examination by a government appointed inspector.

The bar for not allocating housing or other sites in the Local Plan is much higher if the Council cannot deliver its targets. This is similar to the current situation with the Council not having a five-year housing land supply, which makes it much harder for the Council to refuse planning applications for housing.

Given the Council is likely to fall short of delivering its housing target, it will likely need to allocate all 'deliverable' and 'developable' sites (note, these are specific definitions provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)).

If the Council can demonstrate it has done everything it can to deliver its development targets but still falls short, it can then ask neighbouring planning authorities whether they can deliver some of the unmet target in their area. The neighbouring authorities are statutory obliged under the 'Duty to Cooperate' to help if they can.

After this, if the Council still falls short of its targets, there may be justification to set lower targets in the Local Plan.

Is Scenario 5 enough?

Scenario 5 delivers 14,660 homes — 79% of the target.

Why doesn't Scenario 5 meet the full target?

Constraints like landscape protection, infrastructure limits, and site availability mean not all land is suitable or deliverable.

8. Increasing housing density

What is housing density?

It's the number of homes built per area, normally measured by hectares (imagine the size of an international rugby pitch for each hectare). The current average is 30 dwellings/hectare for smaller sites but only 19 dwellings/hectare for larger sites. On the sites where density can potentially be increased, Scenario 5 would need 106 dwellings/hectare to meet the full target – similar to inner city urban areas like London and Bristol.

What does higher density look like?

More compact developments, terraced housing, townhouses, low-rise flats, and smaller gardens. It may mean taller buildings and less open space.

Is this realistic in Cotswold?

Not everywhere. Historic character, conservation areas, and landscape sensitivity limit where higher density is possible. Higher density development may also make it more difficult to deliver some of the homes that are needed, such as larger family homes, accessible homes, and affordable housing.

9. Infrastructure and services

Will infrastructure keep pace with development?

The Council is updating its Infrastructure Delivery Plan. It will assess needs for roads, schools, healthcare, water supply and wastewater treatment, and more. This will be used as evidence to inform the subsequent Regulation 19 Consultation and test whether sites are deliverable.

10. Other types of development

Is the Local Plan just about housing?

No. For example, it also covers:

- Employment and commercial development
- Gypsy and traveller accommodation
- Renewable energy
- Green infrastructure
- Town centre vitality
- ...and much more

What studies are underway?

There are numerous studies being undertaken to support the various aspects of the Local Plan. For example, county-wide assessments of housing, employment, and gypsy/traveller needs are due by the end of 2025. These will inform the subsequent stage of Local Plan consultation.

11. The Council's vision for the district

What is the vision for 2043?

A resilient, inclusive, low-carbon district that has responded to the climate crisis, delivered sustainable communities, and protected the Cotswolds National Landscape.

What are the key objectives?

- Zero-carbon development
- Protect natural and historic environment
- Deliver affordable housing
- Support a low-carbon economy
- Promote sustainable transport
- Ensure infrastructure supports communities

12. On Consultation Changes

Why has the consultation period changed?

The consultation now runs for seven weeks (**14 November 2025 – 2 January 2026**) instead of six weeks. This change was needed because Cabinet approved an addition to the consultation document after the original start date. The extra week ensures transparency and gives residents more time to respond.

What is the new addition to the consultation?

The consultation now includes indicative figures for the total number of homes that could be delivered on strategic sites (these are sites with a potential for 500 or more homes), including any housing on those sites that is delivered, beyond 2043. This allows early discussion of long-term growth and infrastructure needs, so communities can understand the full implications of these sites.

Development Beyond 2043

Why are we looking at development beyond 2043?

The Local Plan period runs to 2043, but some strategic sites would start towards the end of the Local Plan period and may take decades to build out. Government rules require councils to plan for these sites comprehensively over at least 30 years. This means the Local Plan must allocate the entire site now - even if much of the building happens after 2043 - so that infrastructure (roads, schools, utilities) and design standards are planned from the start. For example:

- A site might deliver 800 homes by 2043 but eventually grow to 2,000 homes.
- Planning the whole site now ensures schools, healthcare, green buffers, and transport links etc. are considered from the outset.

Does this mean these sites will definitely be built?

No. The consultation at this stage does not include specific sites but does identify potential broad areas for growth. The figures are indicative only and based on reasoned estimates of what might be delivered, which are subject to change. Sites may be ruled out if evidence shows they are undeliverable or unsuitable. The final allocations will be confirmed at the next stage of consultation on the Local Plan (formally known as the Regulation 19 stage) in 2026.

Infrastructure

Can infrastructure cope with this level of growth?

The Council is updating its Infrastructure Delivery Plan to assess needs for roads, schools, healthcare, water supply, and wastewater treatment, including any planned growth. Water and sewage capacity are major risks - Thames Water's financial challenges could delay upgrades - or new infrastructure being delivered. Without timely infrastructure, housing delivery could be delayed even if sites are allocated.

Strategic Sites

How much bigger could strategic sites be beyond 2043?

Strategic Site	Estimated Total	Estimated up to 2043
Strategic extension north of Ampney Crucis	660	660
Strategic extension south of The Steadings, Cirencester	1,290	400
New settlement west of Driffield	2,100	840
Strategic extension north-east of Fairford	1,400	780
Strategic extension south-west of Kemble	1,070	590
Strategic extension north, south and east of Moreton-in-Marsh	3,970	1,710
Strategic extension south of Preston	2,510	960
Strategic extension north, south and west of Siddington	1,100	880

13. What happens next

What are the next steps for the Local Plan?

- **Now – January 2026:** Regulation 18 consultation
- **Summer 2026:** Regulation 19 draft Local Plan consultation
- **December 2026:** Submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State
- **2027:** Examination in Public
- **Late 2027:** Adoption of the updated Local Plan