

1 Introduction

Background

1.0.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) requires each local planning authority to produce a Local Plan that plans positively for the development and infrastructure required in its area. The NPPF also requires local plans to be prepared with the intention of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.

1.0.2 The aim of the Cotswold District Local Plan is to set out policies and proposals to meet the challenges facing the area over the period 2011-2031. The plan must be consistent with the requirements of the NPPF. Once adopted, the local plan will guide future decisions on the use and development of land in the District and all saved policies in the existing adopted Local Plan will be superseded. Plans need to be kept up to date and it is anticipated that this plan will be reviewed every five years.

1.0.3 The plan brings together a large amount of government policy, research and evidence that underpins its strategy, policies and proposals. It includes population projections, economic forecasts, information about existing planning consents and land supply as well as technical work on matters such as infrastructure, viability and flood risk. This information is available to view on the Council's website (www.cotswold.gov.uk) by navigating to the Planning Policy 'Evidence Base' webpage.

1.0.4 The evidence base is constantly evolving as fresh information comes to light and further studies are completed.

1.0.5 To demonstrate the sustainability of the Plan's strategy, a Sustainability Appraisal has been carried out at each stage of plan preparation and published alongside the other evidence documents.

1.0.6 The Local Plan is accompanied by a District-wide Policies Map together with a Policies Map inset for each Principal Settlement and for any location that is subject to a site-specific policy. The settlement policies identify specific land allocations - for example for housing and employment - as well as local infrastructure. The land allocations, development boundary and any other relevant land use planning designations are all indicated on the inset maps.

1.0.7 Councils and other public bodies are expected to work together across administrative boundaries to plan for the housing, transport and infrastructure that local people need. The Gloucestershire local planning authorities are working together, within the context of the Duty to Co-operate, to ensure that new development plan documents properly address strategic planning and cross-boundary issues. Cotswold District is part of the Gloucestershire Strategic Housing Market Area and the Gloucestershire authorities have worked together on regular updates of their Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).

1.0.8 The Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) and Strategic Housing Market Assessment, together with relevant supporting evidence, provide an objective assessment of housing needs over the Plan period. The Local Plan translates this need into a District-wide housing requirement and allocates land in the most sustainable locations to meet that need.

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1.0.9 The Local Plan is the main basis and starting point for making decisions on planning applications, which must be made in accordance with it, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It therefore gives local communities, developers and investors greater certainty about whether planning applications are likely to be approved. The Local Plan sits alongside the NPPF, which, together with Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), must also be taken into account in making decisions on planning applications and in the preparation of local and neighbourhood development plans.

1.0.10 Neighbourhood development plans, when adopted, form part of the development plan. They are prepared by local communities and can be as simple or as detailed as local people want - provided they are in line with national planning policy and the local plan. Where this plan or any development plan documents are adopted after a neighbourhood development plan has already been adopted, the Council will issue a statement of conformity to clarify whether any policies in the neighbourhood development plan have been superseded.

1.0.11 Other development plan documents and supplementary planning documents may be produced when necessary to cover specific topics, sites, or to provide more detailed guidance. These too will be taken into account in any planning decisions. All relevant planning policy documents can be viewed at the Council offices and online at www.cotswold.gov.uk, by navigating to Planning Policy webpage.

1.0.12 The Local Plan will be supported by a local enforcement plan as a means of maintaining public confidence in the local planning system. The enforcement plan sets out how the local planning authority will monitor the implementation of planning permissions, investigate alleged cases of unauthorised development and take action where it is appropriate to do so.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

1.0.13 The NPPF provides the national policy framework for planning and sets the context within which the system operates. It covers, at a strategic level, matters including housing, the economy, transport, the natural environment and other key issues. Local plans are required to be in conformity with it. Given the status of the NPPF, it is unnecessary for local planning documents to repeat its policies. It therefore is important in preparing planning proposals, or in reaching decisions on them, that the provisions of the NPPF are taken into account alongside the policies of the Local Plan.

1.0.14 A further component that must be taken into account is the PPG.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

1.0.15 Introduced in 2013, the PPG obviates the need for Local Plans to set out detailed generic requirements that previously may have been incorporated into policy. Equally importantly, the PPG is susceptible to change. The government intends to update it regularly.

1.0.16 Planning applications should be determined in accordance with adopted local plan policies and, where appropriate, any adopted neighbourhood development plan unless material considerations (including the NPPF and the PPG) indicate otherwise.

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Using the Local Plan

1.0.17 In this Local Plan, the planning policies are set out in **bold** text and the supporting text is shown in normal text.

1.0.18 It is understandable that people may want "self-contained" planning policies that, individually, seek to cover every eventuality. However, this is both undesirable and unnecessary. It is undesirable because this would result in an overly detailed, repetitious and lengthy document. It is unnecessary because a properly constructed – and correctly used – plan will be adequate **provided its policies are read together**. For instance, a policy relating to development in the countryside does not need to include references to landscape or highway impacts because other policies in the plan deal with those matters. And where the plan is silent on specific matter, reference should be made to the NPPF or, if the issue is one of detail, the PPG. To reiterate, it is important to remember that the Local Plan **must be read as a whole** to fully understand the policy context for decision-making on development proposals. **Therefore, even if a policy states that a proposal 'will be permitted', this is also subject to the consideration of all other relevant policies in the Local Plan and other material considerations.** It should also be noted that all condition clauses should be met where relevant unless stated otherwise.

1.0.19 The numbers of dwellings quoted in relation to housing allocations in the settlements (section 7 - Delivering the Strategy) are indicative estimates. The final number of dwellings built may vary from the estimates, depending on the outcome of the planning application process.

Monitoring the Local Plan

1.0.20 Monitoring the implementation of the Local Plan is an essential component in ensuring its ongoing effectiveness. It is particularly important in relation to the periodic reviews that are needed to keep the Local Plan up-to-date.

1.0.21 Planning policies may have different quantitative and qualitative aspects depending upon the nature of the policy. Some policies are more susceptible to objective measurement than others. For instance, the number of affordable houses permitted over a certain period can be quantified and then measured against the requirements of the relevant policy. On the other hand, the impact that development may have upon the landscape exhibits elements that, although a matter for professional judgement, are to some extent subjective and unquantifiable. Of course, some policies can exhibit both aspects.

1.0.22 The Council recognises that it is important, as far as is reasonable, to distinguish between the quantitative and qualitative when it comes to monitoring the impact of its Local Plan. To that end, where quantitative assessment is appropriate this will be achieved through a variety of means, including the frequency of citation of a policy in planning conditions or the frequency of its citation in refusals of planning permission or in planning appeals. In respect of policies that are more qualitative in nature, the approach will be based on instigation of a "Policy Panel" or workshop, meeting periodically, that will hear the views of relevant professionals in respect of the effectiveness of relevant policies.

1.0.23 This approach reflects the reality of "the art and science of town planning". It represents a pragmatic approach to ensuring we have an effective Local Plan.

Planning applications will be determined in accordance with relevant policies in this Local Plan, which should be considered together, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.