

Local Plan Update Consultation – Moreton-in-Marsh Fact Sheet

Background

Cotswold District Council ran a drop in event in Moreton-in-Marsh on Wednesday 6th March. This is a summary of the questions that were commonly asked and our answers to those questions, which we hope you find helpful.

Please note, a full response report on the Local Plan consultation will be provided separately after the consultation has finished on 7th April.

What is a Local Plan and why do we need one?

The Local Plan provides the district's long term strategy for meeting local needs for new homes, employment, shops, open space and infrastructure like roads, schools and leisure facilities. It also includes policies which are used to decide planning applications.

Local Plans are important because they:

- help to coordinate development and supporting infrastructure;
- avoid random developments;
- provide a supply of housing over a set period of time (the plan period), including affordable housing;
- commit statutory partners, such as Gloucestershire County Council and utility companies, to deliver infrastructure and in a timely manner; and they
- give local people the opportunity to help shape development in their area.

What happens if we do not have a Local Plan?

The government's national policies operate a "principle in favour of sustainable development" policy, which is designed to ensure that national development targets are met.

If the council does not prepare a plan, the development industry is incentivised to submit speculative applications, which would likely lead to uncoordinated patterns of development and weaken the council's ability to negotiate needed infrastructure. Even if the Council refuses these applications, they can be allowed on appeal to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). Having an up-to-date Local Plan is a crucial factor in PINS consideration of planning appeals to ensure the planning system remains "plan led".

Cotswold District Council did not have an adopted Local Plan in the early part of the last decade, which is part of the reason why so many homes have been built in Moreton in recent years and may be a factor in explaining why infrastructure issues exist today.

What is being consulted upon?

1. The district already has an adopted Local Plan. We are proposing some changes to make the Local Plan to respond to the climate change and ecological emergencies that the council has declared. The adopted Local Plan runs up to 2031 and we are seeking feedback on the proposed changes.
2. We are also starting to think about planning for housing, employment, infrastructure, green space and other development needs up to 2041. This includes the amount of additional development that will be needed and where it should be located.

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What is proposed in Moreton-in-Marsh?

Firstly, the Council is **not** proposing 10,000 homes in Moreton-in-Marsh. In fact the Council is not proposing that level of growth for the whole district!

Based on the number of additional homes the national government tells us are needed in the district up to 2041, we estimate that around **3,300** additional homes will be needed across the whole district. In addition, the need for other types of development and supporting infrastructure have to be planned for.

The Local Plan consultation includes eight options for how future development could be distributed, including a new settlement, growth of an existing settlement, growing multiple settlements or scattering development around the district. We are currently asking for feedback on which option is the best approach or whether another option should be considered.

From the evidence we have so far, we also want to highlight that a potential solution may be around 1,500 additional homes, accompanied by employment, infrastructure and other supporting developments, being located at Moreton-in-Marsh. This would be accompanied by the expansion of some other settlements around the district to deliver the 3,300 home overall target.

What has been decided?

Nothing has been decided yet! At this stage, we are consulting on and considering the issues across the district, including those in Moreton-in-Marsh, and how we can find solutions.

We need to consider the feedback from the ongoing consultation, which we hope will raise some really good points, especially about whether strategic scale growth in Moreton is or isn't the best solution and, if not, alternative solutions for how future growth can be accommodated. We also need to commission further evidence studies to better understand whether or not this scale of development in Moreton is actually deliverable. Town planning is an iterative process, and all discussions have to start somewhere.

Why Moreton-in-Marsh?

1. A key element of any Local Plan is its Development Strategy. This dictates the pattern of development in the area. In Cotswold District we have a long-standing Development Strategy that centres on a Settlement Hierarchy. At the top of the hierarchy are Principal Settlements. There are seventeen of these – the largest three with the most services, facilities, employment and the best public transport connections being Cirencester, Tetbury and Moreton-in-Marsh. Cirencester already has a lot of development allocated in the current Local Plan. Tetbury is heavily constrained by its location in the Cotswolds National Landscape. And therefore, following the Development Strategy, we need to consider Moreton.
2. 80% of Cotswold District lies within the Cotswolds National Landscape (formerly known as the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). National policy dictates that the scale and extent of development in National Landscapes should be limited. Much of the land surrounding Moreton is not in the Cotswolds National Landscape.
3. Development should be located in areas with low flood risk. Although some parts of Moreton do have higher flood risk, a large amount of the land surrounding the town has low flood risk.
4. Development can only be located where land is available. Moreton-in-Marsh has various development sites surrounding the town that are available for development.

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5. Development needs to be located close to where people can access services, facilities, their place of work, social connections, and where there are better public transport connections. Compared to most parts of the district, Moreton scores very highly in all these regards.
6. A large-scale development provides an opportunity to plan infrastructure and other needs in a highly coordinated way. We know of various issues in Moreton that may be improved if a larger scale development is planned.

Moreton is not the only location where development is proposed. For example, Cirencester already has a mixed use development, including 2,350 homes, which will contribute towards future development targets. Other settlements around the district will also need to receive additional growth.

Kemble also has a railway station – why not locate development there?

Kemble, as well as some other settlements around the district, are being considered as potential locations for some additional growth. However, Kemble does not have the same level of services, facilities, employment or public transport provision as Moreton and is therefore a less suitable location for strategic scale growth. Kemble also has much fewer sites available for development than Moreton.

What's this talk of a new Garden Village?

Garden villages are purpose built with a clear identity and attractive environment, which provide a mix of homes, including affordable, and are planned by local authorities in consultation with the local community. They provide job opportunities, enhance and connect green spaces and public realm, secure infrastructure investment and provide new community facilities such as schools and health centres, all while ensuring that the community is at the heart of what is planned. They can typically range from 1,500 to 10,000 homes. However, the Local Plan consultation discusses a possible figure of around 1,500 homes for Moreton if strategic growth is focussed here.

There may also be grant funding available for a new garden village on the edge of Moreton, which could help to pay for things such as new infrastructure for the town. If the garden village idea is taken forward, we would try to make sure it is well-connected and integrated with Moreton.

What's proposed at the Fire Service College (FSC)?

The FSC already has a Special Policy in the Local Plan that supports further intensification of their facilities, as well as a 7 hectare site that is already planned for office development.

The FSC propose a new primary school (including early years or nursery provision). In addition, some 'enabling' development has been requested - the proceeds from which will be used to regenerate the FSC's facilities at Moreton, including redeveloping life expired buildings on the FSC site, as well as regenerating the wider site. This would help to secure their long-term future in Moreton-in-Marsh. The enabling development would include:

- around 310 dwellings (market and Affordable Housing).
- A new neighbourhood centre, including a convenience store, a replacement sports centre, a hotel and a public house.
- Relocating the planned office site eastwards and expanding it to become 12.5 hectare. The uses would also be broadened to include a wider variety of employment uses, including general industrial, storage and distribution, office, research and development and light industrial uses (similar to what is already located at Cotswold Business Village).

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Would development be supported by infrastructure?

Yes. We are commissioning an update to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. This assesses what infrastructure is needed to support planned development across the district, including in Moreton. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan is also used to help ensure all future development is supported by appropriate infrastructure and that it mitigates impacts on its immediate area.

Unfortunately, the Local Plan cannot fix all of the existing infrastructure issues in Moreton and it cannot provide everything people may ask for. However, often growth can leverage wider investment to help fix / improve longstanding issues with infrastructure.

We have already heard about various things that people want to see delivered in Moreton, such as improvements to wastewater treatment infrastructure; a new road to ease congestion in the town centre; problems with parking; flooding issues; under-provision of health care and leisure facilities; new education facilities – to name only a few. We want to hear from you what infrastructure is needed in Moreton. We encourage you to tell us by visiting your.cotswold.gov.uk/en-GB/projects/lp-infrastructure

Where would the proposed new road go?

The west of Moreton-in-Marsh is largely within the Cotswolds National Landscape. Because of this, if a new road is to be built, it is likely that the route would be to the east of the town.

A specific route has not been confirmed yet. We need to speak to the County Council (which is the lead Highway Authority), landowners and undertake a feasibility before this can happen.

If strategic growth happens at Moreton, the aim would be to connect the A429 (Fosse Way) to the north of the town with the A429 (Fosse Way) to the south of the town to help ease congestion in the town centre and improve the town centre environment.

When would development take place?

We know from similar sized development proposals that it can take many years from the initial conception stage (where we are now) to the first homes being delivered. The Steadings in Cirencester took over 10 years, for example.

Will a masterplan be provided for Moreton-in-Marsh?

If strategic scale growth is to be provided in Moreton, then this will need to be planned properly in a masterplan and within a wider strategy for the town. However, we are not at that stage yet and this would come further down the line.

How can I respond to the consultation?

Listening to the views of residents and properly consulting with communities on the Local Plan is very important to us.

You can respond to the consultation by following these steps.

1. Please respond using the online consultation system (your.cotswold.gov.uk).

2. You can respond to as many or as few questions as you wish.

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3. **Letter, email or pdf / Word document (or similar) submissions are discouraged** unless you are unable to use the online consultation system (e.g. if you do not have access to a computer or smartphone).
4. **Please make your representation succinct, clear and to-the-point.** This helps us to understand and consider your points and helps us to respond more quickly.

The consultation closes on 7th April 2024.

Is this the only chance to have my say?

No. There will be at least one further public consultation on the Local Plan proposals. In addition, there will be an Examination in Public, run by an independent, government-appointed Inspector, where you will have a further opportunity to get involved. Even once the Local Plan is adopted, you will have further opportunities to get involved in the detail of the design of developments when planning applications are submitted.