

**Council – 27 March 2017**

**Public Questions (13)**

<b>1.</b>	<b>Question from Michael S Barnes to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan (Hopes to attend)</b>
	<p><b><u>Employment Land Allocation</u></b></p> <p>What was the evidenced employment land allocation level for Cheltenham stated in the 2014 draft plan and what is the level of employment land allocation now?</p>
	<b>Response from the Leader</b>
	<p>The amount of employment land allocated in the pre-submission version of the JCS in June 2014 was 64.2 hectares. Of this, an area was identified in Cheltenham Borough as part of Strategic Allocation A5 (North-West Cheltenham Urban Extension). This contains approximately 23.4 hectares of employment land to be delivered up to 2031 (10ha of which is to be for 'B' class uses' and, in terms of site area, is divided roughly 70%/30% between Tewkesbury and Cheltenham Boroughs as shown on the relevant indicative site Plan.</p> <p>Through the JCS examination this topic has been discussed in detail, and provision for 192 hectares of B class land within the plan period (between 2011 and 2031) has been agreed through the Joint Core Strategy. At least 84 hectares of the employment land allocated in the latest version of the JCS (main modifications – February 2017) is provided on strategic allocations. In Cheltenham the same area of land measuring 23.4 hectares is allocated for employment purposes as part of Strategic Allocation A5.</p> <p>In addition, a new strategic allocation has been made at West Cheltenham (Site Allocation A11 refers). This contains approximately 45 hectares of employment land to be delivered up to 2031 and, in terms of site area, is divided roughly 25%/75% between Tewkesbury and Cheltenham Boroughs respectively as shown on the relevant indicative site Plan. Main Modification Policies SP1 and 2 and their explanation text set out in detail how employment provision will be met across the three JCS authorities.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Question from Michael S Barnes to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</b>
	<p><b><u>Development inevitable</u></b></p> <p>Since Alex Chalk MP is strongly pushing for the Cyber Centre to be positioned in Cheltenham and now a sum of £22million has been ear marked, is it now inevitable that the development of the last of Cheltenham's greenspace will happen?</p>
	<b>Response from the Leader</b>
	<p>Development on the site is neither inevitable nor on the last of Cheltenham's green space.</p> <p>Policy A11 of the JCS (main modifications version – February 2017) identifies approximately 45 hectares of B-class led employment as part of the emerging West Cheltenham Strategic Allocation. This will be focussed upon a cyber-security hub and other high technology, and high 'Gross Value Added' job generating development and ancillary uses.</p> <p>Modifications to the JCS to allow for development of a strategic allocation at West Cheltenham</p>

	<p>constitute part of the emerging joint Core Strategy which was agreed by councils in February 2017. However hearings need to be held by an independent inspector to consider the changes in detail and to hear from residents and stakeholders. After this the inspector will write her final written findings and the councils will need to make any changes she requires for soundness before they can decide on whether to adopt the plan.</p> <p>Specifically in relation to the West Cheltenham allocation, it should be noted that significant areas of the site are being set aside for Green Infrastructure and that built development will not occur in these areas. The council is also currently funding work to look at the provision of Local Green Space in relation to the emerging allocation.</p> <p>The development of West Cheltenham is part of a wider, coherent land use strategy for the Borough being put in place through a combination of the JCS and the emerging Cheltenham Plan. Both these documents introduce strategies that embody a wide range of complimentary proposals to help steer development and achieve a sustainable future. Both plans should therefore be considered in their entirety and in this regard, it should be noted there exists a suite of policies designed to protect much of the natural environment and ensure that local communities continue to enjoy the multitude of benefits that the natural environment provides.</p>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Question from Ann D Barnes to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan (Hopes to attend)</b>
	<p><b><u>Cyber Shops</u></b></p> <p>Springbank has had local shops derelict for over 10 years. It is understood that the site is now being considered for housing. There have been many complaints regarding the lack of transport for the basic necessities for those who do not own a car or a computer. Are we expecting all to use cyber shopping? With some areas having little or no broadband how is losing the green fields going to help?</p>
	<b>Response from the Leader</b>
	<p>Sadly there has been no retail or community activity at Springbank Shopping Centre for more than 10 years. It has not proved possible to attract new users to the site and no commercial development proposals have been forthcoming during that time.</p> <p>The emerging Cheltenham Plan has designated the site as a potential housing allocation to help meet objectively assessed housing needs in the Borough up to 2031. The location is a sustainable one being situated within the Principal Urban Area (PUA) where there is a general presumption in favour of development.</p> <p>The site itself comprises entirely of previously developed brownfield land. It is central to the established community and benefits from nearby open space facilities, accessible public transport services, community resource facilities, and primary and secondary schools; all of which are within a short walk. In addition, Springbank Community Resource Centre contains a pharmacy, and a Neighbourhood Shopping Area containing local retail facilities exists in nearby Hester's Way.</p> <p>The future development proposed at West Cheltenham (strategic allocation A11 in the Joint Core Strategy) will provide new community facilities together with opportunities for high quality public transport links which will serve to improve connectivity throughout neighbourhoods in West Cheltenham including the Springbank Area.</p> <p>A strip of land will be safeguarded as part of the proposed Springbank allocation to facilitate the</p>

	possible future construction of a bus link between Pilgrove Way and Springbank Way. This would help knit together existing communities in the north and south which are currently physically separated in terms of vehicular access.
<b>4.</b>	<b>Question from Ann D Barnes to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</b>
	<p><b><u>Local Employment</u></b></p> <p>The Cyber Centre will undoubtedly require specific and specialist talent. It is unlikely that the bulk of those being employed will be existing locals already living in the area. The Cyber Centre offers no benefit to current local employment or residents to any great degree. Will there be any direct links and scholarship programs with local schools and colleges to ensure opportunities can be satisfied locally?</p>
	<b>Response from the Leader</b>
	<p>The proposed strategic allocation at West Cheltenham, whilst focussed on cyber activity does not provide exclusively for the cyber industry and is actually B-class led as explained by Policy A11 of the JCS. This means that a wide range of employment uses could be accommodated which may form part of the supply chain to high technology industries.</p> <p>Notwithstanding, the Council recognises the importance of the cyber industry and associated high 'Gross Value Added' jobs to increasing the prosperity of the area. It is important over time to shift the balance of jobs for school and university leavers toward higher skill and paid employment through focussed improvements in educational attainment and skills.</p> <p>The Local Enterprise Partnership is working with the University of Gloucestershire to improve the skills and knowledge economy in this regard, as well as attracting and retaining people currently holding these skills. It is also an area which the newly established Employment and Skills Board should address.</p> <p>One option being considered through the development of the Cheltenham Plan, and another way of helping to ensure that the resident workforce has the correct skills to match the requirements of local employers might be to introduce a policy which requires proposals for major housing development or major commercial development to include an Employment Skills Plan (ESP). Such plans would need to identify opportunities for the employment and skills development of local people through the implementation of the development proposal.</p> <p>The ESP would need to specify targets that conform to industry standard benchmarks expected from the particular size and type of construction proposed. Assuming this approach is supported in responses to the consultation on the Cheltenham Plan, then more information on this would be developed through the next stage of plan making (the pre-submission version of the Cheltenham Plan) due later this year. Further information on maximising opportunities presented by the cyber security industry can be found on pg. 11,12 and 28 of the Cheltenham Plan Part One Preferred Options Consultation Document.</p>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Question from Mr Peter Holt to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</b>
	<p>Where can I find a printed copy of the latest traffic impact assessment for the West Cheltenham site and has there been a combined impact assessment for the West &amp; North West sites ?</p> <p>Where can a printed copy be found please ?</p>

	<b>Response from the Leader</b>
	<p>National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 32) states that all developments that generate significant amounts of movement should be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment, which would be submitted with a planning application for the development. It will then be used to determine whether the transport impact of the development is acceptable.</p> <p>No planning application for West Cheltenham has yet been received and so we would not expect to have a traffic assessment at this time. However, through the Joint Core Strategy process we have been conducting modelling on the overall traffic impacts which includes sites at both West and North West Cheltenham. The latest work on this, and the emerging JCS transport strategy is available here  <a href="http://www.gct-jcs.org/Examination/New-evidence-base-and-supporting-documents.aspx">http://www.gct-jcs.org/Examination/New-evidence-base-and-supporting-documents.aspx</a></p> <p>Further work to develop the transport modelling using the most recent model (known as the 2013 model) is ongoing, which will allow further development of the JCS transport strategy. The inspector's hearings on the JCS, expected in the summer are likely to discuss this new modelling further.</p>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Question from Adrian Kingsbury to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</b>
	<p>Please confirm :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What the total area of land under the control of Cheltenham Borough Council is Designated as Greenbelt?</li> <li>b) What the area of Greenbelt defined as West Cheltenham that is under the control of Cheltenham Borough Council is?</li> <li>c) What the area of Greenbelt considered to be Cheltenham Racecourse and is under the control of Cheltenham Borough Council is?</li> </ul>
	<b>Response from the Leader</b>
	<p>The answers below are rounded to the nearest hectare, based on measuring existing maps of the areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 815ha (total green belt within the Cheltenham Borough boundary, taken from the current Local Plan mapped area);</li> <li>b) 86ha of the emerging West Cheltenham Strategic Allocation is within Cheltenham Borough;</li> <li>c) The Local Plan does not specifically define an area as the 'Cheltenham Racecourse', but the area around the racecourse itself is around 130ha.</li> </ul>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Question from Adrian Kingsbury to to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</b>
	<p>The 2014 draft plan showed the West Cheltenham area strategic site as safeguarded, what was the sequence of events and justifications that which now support an employment led site of some 45 hectares with the inclusion of initially 500, then 750 and now 1100 houses?</p>
	<b>Response from the Leader</b>

During the JCS examination detailed evidence was heard over a number of sessions on both the Green Belt sensitivity of the site and the potential for development which would meet both economic and housing needs at West Cheltenham. The agendas for these sessions, and the documents produced in relation to them are available on the JCS examination webpage, particularly relevant are the JCS Green Belt papers EXAM 142 and EXAM 196.

The JCS authorities have considered strategic allocation options at West Cheltenham through the plan making process since the Broad Locations report in 2011, and allocation options were considered in 2013. Whilst the Pre Submission Plan identified the land for safeguarding for future development, the Hayden Sewage Treatment plant which forms part of the site and emits odour curtailed further development of the allocation at that time.

Severn Trent is now working with the Council on measures to improve odour emissions, which when undertaken will release parts of the site for development. The latest statement of common ground outlining these measures and the emerging masterplan for the area is at EXAM 198 and a priority for this proposed allocation is ensuring effective masterplanning of phase 1 and a future phase 2.

The JCS inspector heard this evidence over the course of the examination. In December 2015 the inspector published EXAM 146 which contained the 'Inspector's Preliminary Findings on Green Belt Release, Spatial Strategy and Strategic Allocations ' paragraph 113

"Taking account of housing and employment needs overall, including GCHQ's requirements, and my reservations on certain other potential strategic allocations, it seems to me that the Cheltenham part of this proposed safeguarded area might be suitable for allocation. Views are sought from the JCS and other participants on the potential for allocating land in this area."

After hearing further evidence on the emerging allocation at paragraph 126 of EXAM232 the Inspector's interim findings, she writes:

"An additional employment led site at West Cheltenham has been agreed for allocation by the JCS team, who suggest it is also suitable for about 500 dwellings, albeit the developers have put forward a figure of 750. This is in a sustainable location on the edge of Cheltenham and, for the reasons given in my Preliminary Findings, I recommend this site for allocation in the JCS. Allocating this site for 500 dwellings would reduce the remaining unmet requirement to 1,039 (1,539 – 500)."

After further hearings, in her most recent communication, the Inspector's "Note of Recommendations made at the hearing session on 21 July 2016" she writes:

**"West Cheltenham Safeguarded Land** Part of this area has already been recommended as a strategic allocation and I do not propose re-visiting those discussions. It is the remainder of the area proposed for safeguarding that I have re-considered. This proposed safeguarded land makes a significant contribution to the Green Belt according to the AMEC report. Consequently, there is a very high bar to overcome in demonstrating exceptional circumstances. However, in my judgement this bar has been reached for reasons which include the following: there would be a major benefit in Severn Trent Water removing the Hayden Sewage Works from the area, resulting in significantly improved living and working conditions; it would result in a co-ordinated development in two phases, preventing further piecemeal development in the area; it would provide a strong Green Belt boundary; there would be significant contributions to infrastructure, including schools.

	<p>Consequently, I find that exceptional circumstances exist for the release of this land from the Green Belt and, therefore, its safeguarding is sound.</p> <p>Furthermore, the JCS team might wish to consider exploring the possibilities of phase one being expanded and additional housing being provided in this area during the Plan period.”</p> <p>The JCS team have considered this in light of the statement of common ground, and work on the capacity of the site for employment and housing purposes, and maximising the sustainable utilisation of the area. Through this work, the main modifications plan has been prepared, identifying at least 45ha of employment land and 1,100 new homes for the area between the plan's adoption and 2031.</p>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Question from Carol Kingsbury to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan (Cannot attend)</b>
	Will the West Cheltenham Greenbelt Group receive any assistance in developing a green space application for consideration by the Inspector ? Other communities have had so much time to prepare theirs but we have not.
	<b>Response from the Leader</b>
	The Main Modifications consultation running till the 10 <sup>th</sup> of April at <a href="http://www.gct-jcs.org">www.gct-jcs.org</a> will allow detailed representations on West Cheltenham to be made, which will be passed in full to the inspector. There will be further hearing sessions (likely to be in early summer) where representations on West Cheltenham can also be made. Work will continue to be undertaken to support the communities in developing their consideration of local green space, through elected members and neighbourhood coordination groups.
<b>9.</b>	<b>Question from Carol Kingsbury to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</b>
	How many local young people will be able to gain employment from this Cyber Hub ? Will there be any scholarship programs and or direct links with local schools ?
	<b>Response from the Leader</b>
	It is important that the local community benefits from any development at West Cheltenham and work is ongoing to develop the emerging employment opportunities from this site, which is identified in the plan as a large and high quality employment development. Because this work is ongoing numbers of prospective young employees are not yet established. Through the master planning of the site and on going social sustainability work the above will be progressed and connections fostered.
<b>10.</b>	<b>Question from Rachel Fargher to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</b>
	Exam 142 of the JCS Examination Base, Green Belt Topic Paper, cites responses to a questionnaire from over 550 individuals and businesses regarding changes to the Greenbelt boundary. Can the council confirm how many of the 550 individuals/businesses are located in the Springbank and Hester's Way wards?
	<b>Response from the Leader</b>
	<p>The figure of 550 responses relates to the 'Issues &amp; Options' stage consultation on the Cheltenham Plan. It was a consultation not required by the statutory plan-making process, but it was undertaken in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>For a response to be accepted to that consultation, an address was not required if a valid e-mail address was provided. Therefore, a significant number of respondents did not provide their address and no detailed data exists to show how many respondents came from which ward.</p>

	I would again emphasise that the consultation was part of the Cheltenham Plan and not the JCS. It did not include any suggestions for Green Belt release in the Borough and was undertaken in June-August 2015, well before the West Cheltenham Strategic Allocation was included in the JCS Main Modifications.
<b>11.</b>	<b>Question from Rachel Fargher to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</b>
	Exam 142 of the JCS Examination Base, Green Belt Topic Paper, references an intention to always have the ability to make non-strategic changes to the Greenbelt boundaries, can the council explain what is meant by non- strategic in this context, and what is the limit of a non-strategic change to the Greenbelt boundary.
	<b>Response from the Leader</b>
	<p>The questioner may have misinterpreted the Green Belt Topic Paper.</p> <p>Green Belt boundaries can only be amended through the local plan process. It has always been the intention that the forthcoming Cheltenham Plan should have the ability to make local non-strategic changes to the detailed boundaries of the Green Belt, but only if exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.</p> <p>It is however clear from work carried out for the JCS, that the potential for such Green Belt change is likely to be limited. Indeed, the recent consultation on the 'Preferred Options' stage of the Cheltenham Plan proposed no additional changes to the Green Belt.</p>
<b>12.</b>	<b>Question from Mary Nelson to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay</b>
	In view of the recent serious accident in Albion Street involving an elderly lady knocked off a mobility scooter, please can you state which 'Disability Groups' were consulted over Phase 1 of the Cheltenham Transport Plan, and were the Phase 1 plans that were shown to these Disability Groups implemented <u>exactly</u> as they had been shown, or had any changes been made to those plans either before or during the course of the Phase 1 implementation?
	<b>Response from the Cabinet Member</b>
	<p>The Phase 1 designs were discussed during a site visit with the CBC Accessibility Working Group in March 2016.</p> <p>Representatives attended from the following organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Star College;</li> <li>• Insight Gloucestershire;</li> <li>• Shopmobility;</li> <li>• St Vincent &amp; St George's Association; and</li> <li>• CBC Councillors.</li> </ul> <p>The attendees represented a wide range of disabilities, from mobility impairments, to blind &amp; deaf impairments.</p> <p>Verbal descriptions of the scheme were provided to the attendees, to ensure that everyone was provided with the same information. The Phase 1 scheme presented to the accessibility group is as constructed.</p>
<b>13.</b>	<b>Question from Mary Nelson to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor</b>

	<b>Andrew McKinlay</b>
	<p>The Albion Street accident must now raise even greater safety concerns regarding the permission that has been given in the CTP Traffic Regulation Orders for a new bus route to cross through Boots Corner bisecting the existing bus route, once Boots Corner has been closed to general traffic (although remaining open to buses, taxis, private hire and other permitted vehicles).</p> <p>Is it CBC's intention to still permit this dangerous new bus route to cross the newly created public realm space which has long been claimed to be a major benefit of closing Boots Corner?</p>
	<b>Response from the Cabinet Member</b>
	<p>GCC Cabinet approved the following in July 2015:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accept the recommendations from the Traffic Regulation Committee made on 15 January 2015 relating to the inner-ring road changes, with the exception of the Boots Corner proposed trial; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Make those elements of the traffic regulation orders relating to the Cheltenham Transport Plan, as detailed on the Traffic Regulation Order Proposed Restriction Changes Schedule at Appendix B of the decision report; and</li> <li>(b) Defer a decision on the elements of the traffic regulation orders relating to Boots Corner.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Authorise the Commissioning Director: Communities and Infrastructure to implement the scheme through the following phased approach: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Albion Street – October 2015 to February 2016;</li> <li>(b) Imperial Square and Oriel Road – April to July 2016;</li> <li>(c) Royal Well – Summer 2016;</li> <li>(d) Contingent on the successful implementation of the other schemes, a Boot's Corner experimental order and trail [sic] scheme – Spring 2017.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>The TROs that were consulted upon in 2013 - 2014 for Boots Corner were not approved and no changes to the existing TRO for Boots Corner currently exist.</p> <p>Work is currently ongoing to determine TROs to be trialed under a 'Boots Corner experimental order'. If the trial is implemented and is successful, designs to re-cast the public realm at Boots Corner will be created.</p>