

Council

27 February 2025

Member Question

1. Question from Councillor Suzanne Williams to the Cabinet Member Major Developments and Housing Delivery, Councillor Alisha Lewis

A recent Green party leaflet delivered in my area referred to the Cyber Park as a vanity project.

Given that the Golden Valley project will build on our town's strength as a centre for cyber and technology, bring thousands of new jobs to the town, and include over a thousand new homes, including affordable homes, does the cabinet member agree with me that the description of this as a vanity project is a long way off the mark and that it will bring a much-needed economic boost to the west of the town and to Cheltenham as a whole?

Member response

I'd like to thank Councillor Williams for the question.

GCHQ's association with Cheltenham dates back to the 1950s. Today thousands of people in our town work for GCHQ or in the defence and security supply chain, helping to deliver GCHQ's central mission of keeping the UK safe. Because of this, technology, security and cyber industries represent a significant, vital and growing part of our local economy. Delivering the Golden Valley Development and the National Cyber Innovation Centre – named IDEA, was included as a commitment within the National Cyber Strategy and it also forms part of the delivery plan for the National Industrial Strategy making it recognised by government as a key to both our security and our economy.

But more than that, the seven decades relationship between Cheltenham, GCHQ and our national security sector has fundamentally shaped and influenced our town. Employees working to keep us safe are our residents, our community our constituents. In many cases they are even family members. Almost everyone in Cheltenham will be related to, work with or know someone who works in a role that helps to keep us safe. So instead of the Green Party choosing words like 'vanity project', which only serve to insult to all those who work so hard to protect us, what all councillors should be doing is recording our thanks to all those people who live and work in Cheltenham who are committed to combatting the very real threats that this country faces, just as we did when awarded GCHQ the freedom of the borough in 2019.

In terms of the opportunity the Golden Valley Development presents, when completed this new district in Cheltenham will have created thousands of high-quality jobs and hundreds of more social and affordable homes which local people will be able to take advantage. As a councillor, I am still struck by how challenging circumstances are for many families and communities, particularly in the west of Cheltenham. This highlights just how important it is to make sure that Golden Valley can provide more opportunities for local people to secure good jobs, get on the housing ladder and feel the benefit of the prosperity and success that Golden Valley can provide.

Because of its importance to the national security of our country, the delivery of Golden Valley should be a non-political issue where there is cross party consensus. That's why it's disappointing that with its recent leaflets and slogans, the Green Party is only demonstrating that they don't understand or don't care about our town and the fundamental role it plays in our national security. But more than that, it shows everyone that the Green Party is anti those who work to keep us safe, anti-jobs and anti-aspiration.