

Council

Thursday, 5th September, 2013
2.30 - 7.00 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Wendy Flynn (Chair), Colin Hay, Andrew Chard, Garth Barnes, Ian Bickerton, Nigel Britter, Chris Coleman, Barbara Driver, Bernard Fisher, Jacky Fletcher, Rob Garnham, Les Godwin, Penny Hall, Tim Harman, Rowena Hay, Diane Hibbert, Peter Jeffries, Steve Jordan, Paul Massey, Helena McCloskey, Andrew McKinlay, David Prince, John Rawson, Anne Regan, Rob Reid, Chris Ryder, Diggory Seacome, Duncan Smith, Malcolm Stennett, Charles Stewart, Klara Sudbury, Pat Thornton, Jon Walklett, Andrew Wall, Simon Wheeler (Vice-Chair) and Roger Whyborn

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Councillors Holliday, Lansley, McLain and Williams.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Chard declared an interest as a member of Leckhampton and Warden Hill Parish Council.

Councillors Coleman, Fisher, Harman, Colin Hay, Prince, Sudbury and Wheeler all declared interests as members of Gloucestershire County Council and indicated that they had been granted dispensations from the Standards Committee to participate and vote in the meeting.

Councillors Fletcher and Stennett declared an interest as directors of Gloucestershire Airport if it should come up during the debate.

Councillor Garnham declared a pecuniary interest as he had a commercial relationship with Hunter Page Planning Ltd, Cheltenham who were the planning agents for the site identified as Policy A4 - North Brockworth Urban Extension and his company, Mediation in Planning Ltd, was paid by the owners of this particular site.

Councillor McLain had declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the GCC Executive and therefore had absented himself from the meeting.

Councillor Regan declared an interest as a member of Leckhampton and Warden Hill Parish Council.

Councillor Ryder declared a potential pecuniary interest in the Leckhampton White Land and therefore would leave the chamber for the rest of the meeting.

Councillor Sudbury declared an interest as a member of LEGLAG.

Councillor Whyborn declared an interest in matters relating to Leckhampton as the Cabinet Member responsible for sustainability.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting held on 22 July were agreed as a correct record subject to Councillor Driver wishing it recorded that she could not agree the minutes because they included additional information regarding a response provided after the Council meeting in relation to Member Questions.

4. COMMUNICATIONS BY THE MAYOR

The Mayor welcomed the public to the meeting and explained how she would be running the meeting.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

1.	Question from Mr Kit Brauholtz to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	Are Councillors and Officers aware that the urban extension at Leckhampton proposed in the draft JCS lies immediately adjacent to the Cotswold AONB boundary, and will therefore inevitably have a damaging impact on the Cotswold AONB setting, particularly so as it lies immediately below Leckhampton Hill with its renowned views? Are they further aware that this is contrary to Policy S7 on page 65 of the draft JCS which states that "Development proposals in and adjacent to the Cotswold AONB will be required to conserve and enhance its landscape and scenic beauty"? And are they still further aware that at least three Planning Inspectors who have previously considered possible large-scale development on this land have recommended against such development largely because of the effect it would have on the landscape and views?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The Council is well aware of the sensitivity of the location of this proposed urban extension. It will ensure that the JCS takes full account of that sensitivity as it moves forward towards adoption. The council does not accept the contention that the proposed urban extension is contrary to draft policy S7, rather it should help to ensure that any future development in this location carefully considers potential impacts on the setting of the AONB, including key views. Policy A6 sets out development requirements for this urban extension and in so doing acknowledges the need for proposals to have regard to landscape sensitivity including taking account of flood risk and providing for a sizeable green landscape buffer is proposed along the eastern and southern edge of development. Policy A6 states that higher density

	<p>development should be focused in areas of lower landscape sensitivity. It also protects accessible green corridors adjacent to Hatherley Brook and footpaths to the southern part of the site. The policies of the plan need to be read together.</p> <p>In relation to landscape and visual impact, the JCS also contains policy S6 which seeks to guard against detrimental effects and ensure that new landscape planting can be used to reduce impacts and enhance the existing landscape. With applications for major development of this sort the developer will need to do a specific assessment of landscape and visual impact drawing upon a recent assessment carried out around the urban fringe.</p> <p>Whilst the council is aware the observations of planning inspectors commenting upon past proposals in this area, it notes that such opinions do not have the effect of binding precedent on any future decisions particularly where they pre-date the NPPF and the presumption in favour of sustainable development.</p> <p>These policies in combination contain a robust approach to addressing possible landscape impacts of development at Leckhampton, particularly in relation to the AONB. Clearly these issues, in particular the size and location of green buffers will form a key part of the planned consultation on which public feedback will be welcome.</p> <p>In a supplementary question, Mr Brauholtz asked if the mitigating actions referred to in the answer could not be put in place would the council turn down any planning applications for this land?</p> <p>The Leader responded that this was a useful point which would be noted and responded to as part of the consultation.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Question from Mrs Elizabeth Barker to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan</p>
	<p>There has been an increase in population for Gloucestershire in the ten years to 2011 of 5.7% (Gloucestershire population 597,000 in 2011); verified by Office of National Statistics and reported by South West Observatory.</p> <p>However, a very large increase of 24.3% in housing is proposed by the JCS at 33,200, (Gloucester housing stock 50,363, Cheltenham 33,200 and Tewkesbury 35,126, with a total of 136,418, for JCS area in the plan period to 2031, or approximately 12% growth in housing over ten years.</p> <p>Why are Cheltenham Borough Council officers pushing for more than double the housing needed for our current population growth, given that the district household size has flat lined, (Gloucester 2.38, Cheltenham 2.2 and Tewkesbury 2.3), following a long term trend as reported by the Department of Communities and Local Government in their April 2013 report.</p>

	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> <p>Cheltenham Borough Council undertook an independent peer review of household formation rates overseen by a member scrutiny task group. The conclusions of this work have informed the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) which establishes the housing need for the JCS. Details are set out in the report undertaken by consultants Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research. Assumptions are made within this work about population growth including levels of household formation, unemployment, economic activity and commuting.</p> <p>The OAN for the JCS does not assume that the past household growth rate will remain constant, but that over the plan period there will be some return to previous trends where younger and older people form separate households and that the economy, to some degree recovers.</p> <p>The consultants' report is available for scrutiny on the JCS website www.gct-jcs.org</p> <p>The plan is based upon a detailed evidence base, reflects Government policy and is presented within the context of delivering a sound plan to a future public examination.</p> <p>Clearly there are concerns about whether the OAN is too high and the methodology for the calculation will be a key subject of the planned consultation.</p>
3.	<p>Question from Ms Margaret White to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan</p> <p>In the previous JCS Public Consultation, the majority of the public and organisations who submitted a response were in favour of scenario A, with a housing target of 16,200.</p> <p>How can the JCS justify doubling the numbers? Can the Council please give a breakdown of exactly how the housing target is calculated; which ONS population projection is used, and the average household size for each of the three districts?</p> <p>Please can the actual numbers with references be provided.</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> <p>A key change since the previous consultation is the implementation of the National Planning Policy Framework and its requirement to meet the objectively assessed development need. Scenario A showed the likely housing numbers deliverable within existing urban boundaries rather than how need would be met. The background to Policy SP1 sets out the context of the previous public consultation. The comments received in respect of scenario A have been balanced against the wider JCS evidence base, the context of the National Planning Policy Framework and in the context of bringing forward a sound plan.</p> <p>Detail of the calculation is set out in report prepared by consultants</p>

	<p>Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (see response to question 2).</p> <p>In a supplementary question, Ms White indicated that the ONS had only intended their figures to be used on a temporary basis. If this was the case why was the council using incorrect figures and basing its projections on a 2 year period rather than 10 years.</p> <p>In response the Leader advised that the figures would be scrutinised thoroughly during the next phase and the public would be informed of the outcome.</p>
4.	Question from Ms Margaret White to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>Given the election pledges by the Lib/Dem in May 2012, does the proposed JCS demonstrate a change of policy for the Liberal Democrat Party and should the public have been given notice for May 2013 before policy implementation?</p> <p>For reference, extract from the Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Cheltenham, March 2012.</p> <p><i>"We want an economically successful town that provides jobs for all – but not one which sacrifices its environmental quality by sprawling beyond its current boundaries and into the Green Belt. We need housing for local people – we need to be careful to control the amount of "market" housing available, so that we avoid sucking in people in significant numbers from the rest of the UK and Europe."</i></p> <p>And the first major aims in the future – March 2012:</p> <p><i>"1. To resist urban sprawl while securing new development, economic growth and jobs – and sufficient units of social housing for local people – targeted on "brownland" sites within the existing urban area while continuing to protect significant urban green spaces including gardens."</i></p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>This is not the plan that any of us wanted to see. Certainly in the Liberal Democrats we wanted to be able to manage population growth in the Cheltenham area and therefore protect the Green Belt. For a while the Government's localism agenda gave us reason to hope we could do that.</p> <p>However, the publication of the final version of the National Planning Policy Framework dashed those hopes. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF mandates councils to "prepare Local Plans on the basis that objectively assessed development needs should be met, and with sufficient flexibility to respond to rapid shifts in demand or other economic changes."</p> <p>Paragraph 28 says plans must "meet household and population projections, taking account of migration and demographic change".</p> <p>The upshot of this is that we have to prepare plans which don't manage</p>

	<p>population growth, demographic change and economic growth. They simply respond to projections of what these changes will be.</p> <p>Liberal Democrats are committed as far as possible to developing brownfield sites first. However, the Planning Minister Nick Boles has recently confirmed that, in the Government's view, meeting the assessed need takes priority over protecting the Green Belt.</p> <p>We need to bear in mind that the JCS has to go through an examination by planning inspectors and will not be accepted unless it meets the Government's policy requirements. It would therefore appear inevitable that some areas will need to be removed from Green Belt to allow for planned urban extensions. The JCS limits the loss to 15 per cent of the total Green Belt in the period up to 2031 and a further 4 per cent thereafter. It retains a substantial buffer of green land between Cheltenham and Gloucester in the west and Cheltenham and Bishops Cleeve in the north. It is deeply regrettable that there should be any loss of Green Belt, but we have to recognise that the NPPF limits our freedom of action.</p>
5.	Question from Mr David Pitts to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	Can Cheltenham Borough Council please provide the number of affordable homes and the number of social homes factored into the JCS Housing targets?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	This will be set out in Strategic Housing Market Assessment, still to be finalised. The intention is that this will be published in time for the proposed public consultation starting on 15 th October 2013 and the findings will be incorporated into the pre submission version of the JCS.
6.	Question from Mr David Pitts to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	We do need affordable apartments/flats for first time buyers. What efforts have the local Council taken to bring back into occupancy the empty flats above shops in the town? How many of them are there? The Haines & Strange project development is an excellent example of town development and has been put forward for a CPRE award.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	It is entirely true that affordability is a big issue in Cheltenham and market forces are unlikely the ever resolve this. Cheltenham's popularity as a location means new housing is likely to attract new people to the area rather than resolve affordability issues for local people. In addition to developing the affordability policy in the JCS, possible policy interventions to tackle the issue along the lines suggested will be considered in the Cheltenham Plan.
7.	Question from Mr Barry Simon to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan

	<p>Has the Joint Core Strategy used Office of National Statistics long term forecasts of population growth throughout in calculating anticipated population increase in the JCS area?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> <p>The baseline for the JCS calculations is the interim 2011-based subnational population projections for England.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Mr Simon asked why the JCS was using a statistical basis that ONS themselves had stated was not suitable for this purpose.</p> <p>The Leader indicated that the council had taken expert advice but they would be happy to review this aspect as part of the consultation and include a response in the final document.</p>
8.	<p>Question from Mr Pat Alexander to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan</p> <p>According to page 23 of the document, Gloucestershire Local Transport plan 2011-2026, between 15,000 & 20,000 vehicles flow along the A46 highway on average every day. This is evidenced by regular tailbacks over 1 mile in length entering the outskirts of Cheltenham during morning & evening commuting periods. The direct result of these traffic flows is that the levels of Nitrogen Dioxide in Shurdington Road have breached National limits during March 2011. Bath Road and Hatherley Way are also known to produce similar results according the Council spreadsheet "NO2_data___2012".</p> <p>On page 45 of this document, the principles and policies of the LTP include the following requirement:</p> <p>P5d "The County will comply with any statutory duty it may have in future in respect of air or noise pollution resulting from traffic on the highway authority network."</p> <p>P5e "Through the planning process, developers and scheme promoters will be required to undertake assessments to determine if their development or scheme will be subject to or create poor air quality or noise in excess of the thresholds as advised by Government and to commit to mitigating those effects."</p> <p>Therefore, in the interests of the health of local residents, are the Councillors minded to reject the JCS plans on the basis that, should there be 1,802 new dwellings built in the environs of this section of the A46, air pollution levels are inevitably going to breach National targets?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>

	<p>The Local Transport Plan requires developers to assess the impact of their proposals in terms of air quality and noise, and to mitigate any anticipated effects. There is no evidence (a) that atmospheric pollution from development in this area will breach national thresholds or (b) that any atmospheric pollution potentially arising that may breach national thresholds cannot be mitigated.</p> <p>Any concerns can be raised during the proposed consultation.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Mr Alexander asked what mitigating actions would be required of developers to try and reduce the air pollution levels to below national limits.</p> <p>The Leader advised that he was not able to answer this question at this time but would be happy to provide a detailed response as part of the consultation process if not before.</p>
9.	<p>Question from Ms Alice Ross to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan</p>
	<p>How on earth is any meaningful conclusion as to the feasibility of the JCS proposals to be reached by the public and by Councillors alike if, as I see from paragraph 2.8 of the document under discussion, that the critical sections on Infrastructure and Transport Modelling have not yet been completed?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>It is accepted that there still exists gaps in the evidence base, this is being addressed. The intension is to publish the Infrastructure Development Plan before the start of the proposed consultation on 15th October 2013. Any amendments needed will be incorporated into the pre submission version of the JCS.</p> <p>Detailed transport modelling has yet to be carried out. However there has been ongoing engagement with Gloucestershire Highways. This engagement has both informed the transport policies of the draft JCS together with the policies on strategic allocations and urban extensions.</p> <p>While the draft JCS document is as complete as currently possible, the proposed consultation in October/November 2013 is non-statutory. There will be statutory consultation on the 'final' version of the JCS once it is published in March 2014.</p> <p>In a supplementary question, Ms Ross asked when exactly would the infrastructure and transport modelling documents be available to the public, not to mention other missing links such as the sustainability and viability appraisals and health impact assessment, and should these not have formed the basis of any proposals rather than being tacked on as an afterthought?</p> <p>The Leader indicated that all the figures would be reviewed as these documents became available.</p>

10.	Question from Mrs Jacky Potter to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	If analysis by the Highway Authority of the highway consequences of the proposed Strategic sites at Leckhampton, Shurdington and Brockworth, all of which lie on, or close to, the A46 Shurdington Road shows that unacceptably high congestion and/or air pollution will result at one or more points on the A46, which seems highly likely, will some or all of these proposed sites be removed from the strategy, as being undeliverable? (see Policy D3 (p117) of the draft JCS).
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Having regard to the answer provided to question 8, this will depend upon the feasibility – in environmental as well as financial terms - of any measures that may be required to mitigate impacts that may be identified. As set out in my answer to question 9, there has been ongoing engagement with Gloucestershire Highways.
11.	Question from Mrs Jacky Potter to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	The public perception is that developers are targeting greenfield sites first to maximise profits, with large, well advanced applications for the NW Cheltenham Greenbelt and Leckhampton. The real concern is that this JCS emerging evidence of >24% growth in housing (33,200), voted through for public consultation by all three councils, combined with named strategic sites, will enable applicants to push through unsustainable planning applications. Can CBC give assurances that these planning applications will be sensibly phased, divided into manageable projects, that time is given for the vital sustainability work and that planning committees are fully briefed on the JCS Policy.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Whilst it is a matter for developers to submit proposals as and when they see fit, the JCS will set out the phasing of major development sites it proposes. The JCS is subject to Sustainability Appraisal and any major development proposals will be required to be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment. Members dealing with planning applications will be fully briefed on JCS policies within the context of any future planning applications.
12.	Question from Mrs Helen Wells to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	The NPPF Section 9, Protecting the Green Belt Land, clearly states that the Green Belt is to PREVENT URBAN SPRAWL, and to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas, and that planning authorities should promote development towards urban areas, inside the Green Belt boundaries. Why is this authority proposing to build a huge development, for 5,000 homes, to the north west of Cheltenham ,on prime agricultural land,

	which in itself is the equivalent to a new town the size of Tewkesbury, without any support infra-structure in place, which makes it totally unsustainable?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The general approach of the planning system is, where possible, to protect land within the Green Belt from development. That is indeed the fundamental approach taken by the JCS. However, where insufficient developable land exists outside the Green Belt to meet identified need the National Planning Policy Framework acknowledges that adjustments to the Green Belt boundary may be made through the development plan so that need can be met by carefully considered release of land. It will be essential that the proposed development at North West Cheltenham takes place with the required level and quality of supporting infrastructure coming forward in synchronisation with development of the area. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which it is intended to published before 15th October 2013, will set out the details.
13.	Question from Councillor Dr Adrian Mears to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p><i>This question relates to a key issue that was raised by Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council in its submission to the JCS consultation in February 2012 but which has not been included in list of key issues in paragraph 1.9 of the Report of the Leader on the JCS motion.</i></p> <p>The draft JCS assumes a future demography and housing need for Cheltenham that includes a high net inward migration of people in the over-60 and over-75 age groups, encouraged by the high level of house building that is proposed. Although the whole of the UK is facing the difficult challenge of how to support its ageing population, the JCS with the amount of house building it proposes will make the problem substantially more serious for Cheltenham, creating an increasing deficit between the growing cost of supporting the ageing population and the reducing income from central government for social care and healthcare. Many older residents will struggle as public and private pensions and investments are ravaged by inflation and by low annuity rates. Cheltenham could then fall into a vicious spiral in which growing poverty and worsening services and infrastructure make the town less attractive for investment, for employers and for people of high ability.</p> <p>Is Cheltenham Borough Council concerned about this danger from the JCS proposals, and if so, what will the Borough Council do to address it?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	It is not necessarily the case that in-migrants in the age range cited will

	<p>be encouraged by the level of house building proposed in the JCS. It is equally or perhaps more likely that migrants in this age-range are attracted to existing property due to their generally higher level of affluence in comparison with other cohorts. This is a factor taken into account in objectively assessing the need for housing in the JCS area. Whilst your concerns are noted, it is very important moreover to acknowledge that the planning system is unable to control migration in any age-range, from within the UK or from abroad. The aim is to publish the Strategic Housing Market Assessment by 15th October and then this issue will be further reviewed.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Dr Mears asked was it not the case that the NPPF mandated the council to build only what was needed to meet objective needs, and not inflated needs, and then to keep a flexible reserve in case events turn out differently?</p> <p>The Leader advised that the council would be taking expert advice on the figures and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment would be a key document to review.</p>
14.	Question from Councillor Dr Adrian Mears to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>As is mentioned in paragraph 1.10 of the Leader's Report on the JCS, Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council has submitted a neighbourhood planning concept plan and local green space application to Cheltenham Borough Council for green field land in Leckhampton that is a potential strategic site for development. This concept plan and local green space application has also been submitted to Tewkesbury Borough Council by Shurdington Parish Council. Among other evidence, it contains detailed modelling of the morning traffic queue into Cheltenham on the A46. The modelling is based on a large number of traffic surveys conducted by the parish council and has been independently verified by a traffic consultant. It shows that housing development of the scale and type currently being proposed in Leckhampton and at Brockworth would together cause the morning A46 traffic queue to extend down to and along the A417 and probably onto the M5 at junction 11A. This does not include any additional development that might be proposed on the green belt between Chargrove Lane and Up Hatherley Way. The proposed development on the Leckhampton land alone would cause the queue to extend over 5 km, as far as the A417. The time it would take to commute into Cheltenham would impose a great economic cost and would make it hard for people living south of the A417 to work in Cheltenham.</p> <p>How then can large scale development south of Cheltenham possibly be sustainable?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Please refer to the answers to questions 8, 9 and 10.</p> <p>Warden Hill and Leckhampton Parish Council have received a response from the Council in regard to the application for a Local Green Space</p>

	<p>designation. The Parish Council cannot, through the document prepared, legally apply for Local Green Space designation. However, the Parish Council have been advised that the report prepared will be reviewed and taken into account as a consultation response to the draft JCS.</p> <p>The council has not had sight of the traffic modelling evidence cited, but will be undertaking its own traffic modelling work shortly. Engagement has been ongoing with Gloucestershire Highways.</p> <p>In a supplementary question, Dr Mears asked whether the council needed to have much better information now on the traffic problems and potential solutions before it can agree to large-scale development on Cheltenham's south side?</p> <p>In response the Leader agreed that further analysis needed to be done on this issue but advised that they were not yet at the end of the process.</p>
15.	Question from Helen Wells to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>What action is this Council taking to ensure development takes place on all available brown field sites before considering planning applications on green belt land?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Draft Policy C1 implies that brownfield development will take precedence over development on previously undeveloped land. However, it should be noted that not all brownfield sites are suitable for development and that once the JCS is adopted none of the urban extension sites will be in the Green Belt.</p> <p>In considering sites it is also important that the Council has regard and acts upon the guidance on the need for a 5 year housing land supply, set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Applying the approach as suggested will make Cheltenham extremely vulnerable to not having a 5 year supply of housing and therefore at risk from speculative development.</p> <p>While the Council is keen to ensure development of brownfield sites, it cannot refuse to consider planning applications relating to Green Belt land on the basis that brownfield sites may be available. The council will apply the policies of the development plan and National Planning Policy Framework in considering such applications. It will be a matter for applicants to demonstrate that there are very special circumstances justifying their proposals for development on Green Belt land.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Helen Wells asked why the council was not encouraging or enforcing brownfield development first when the NPPF core planning principles chapter, paragraph 17 point 8, says that the local authority must encourage the effective use of land by the re-use of land that has previously been developed i.e brownfield land.</p>

	In response the Leader advised that the council would be encouraging the use of brownfield sites first. However this type of development was sometimes more difficult and may not be sufficient to match the housing need.
16.	Question from Charlie Watson on behalf of Gloucestershire CPRE to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>Policy C.3 refers to the provision of Affordable housing.</p> <p>The draft Strategy currently proposes making provision to meet a housing need of 33,200, comprising both market and 'affordable' homes – the latter being defined in paragraph 4.124. However, nowhere in the Consultation draft is information provided on the proportion of the new homes total required to meet each type of housing. Additionally, Policy C3 is silent on the actual percentage of affordable homes that needs to be provided on the proposed strategic sites. So:-</p> <p>What proportion of the proposed total housing requirement has the Strategy assumed for the provision of social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing in reaching its conclusion that 33,200 homes are required to meet housing needs?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Please refer to the answer to question 5. This is accepted as a key issue and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment will set out the proportion of affordable homes – see draft policy C3.
17.	Question from Charlie Watson on behalf of Gloucestershire CPRE to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	How has the Strategy determined that the proportion of 'affordable' homes can viably be delivered during the plan period in order to demonstrate that the plan will be 'sound' and not merely likely, by default, to allow substitution of additional market homes to meet the overall target number?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	I share the concern raised and seeking to provide sufficient affordable housing is a key element of the JCS. However, the question conflates need and supply. On the basis of need identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, the JCS will seek to deliver as much as it can without compromising the viability of development having regard to the requirement simultaneously to bring forward other infrastructure on and off site. In reality this will differ from site to site according to material considerations. This approach is reflected in the wording of JCS draft policy C3.
18.	Question from Gerry Potter to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	On page 108 of the draft JCS document 'Housing' is shown from the A46

	<p>Shurdington Road to Leckhampton Farm Court and on what is known as SD2 (the Tewkesbury White Land). The owners of the pig field at Farm Lane, on the Leckhampton land, have made it very clear that they do not wish to sell that land and, as far as we are aware, Gloucestershire County Council have not made any commitment to sell their land for development. Why is the map on page 108 showing these areas to be included in the strategic site and can you please explain the latest situation regarding the GCC land?</p> <p>There are also two Town and Village Green applications, and an NPPF Local Green Space application on the Leckhampton and Shurdington lands. Can the Council please comment on the deliverability of this strategic site.</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>Engagement with landowners is ongoing. Please see response to question 14 in regard to the application of a Local Green Space designation. Evidence and engagement to date indicates that the urban extension allocated at policy A6 is deliverable.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Mr Potter asked why the results of a recent Green Belt review had not been taken into account when designating this land for potential housing?</p> <p>In response the Leader advised that it was a difficult process and there may be a necessity to take some land out of the Green Belt.</p>
19.	<p>Question from Gerry Potter to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan</p>
	<p>On page 65 para 4.72 of the draft JCS document it states: "Development close to, but outside, the AONB boundary has the potential to have a detrimental impact on its setting through, for example, impacting on key views into and out of the AONB or impacting on landscape character in and around the AONB boundary. Applications in the setting of the AONB must fully consider any potential impacts". Will "any potential impacts" be strongly considered when making decisions on strategic sites very close to the AONB?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>Please see response to question 1. Impacts upon the AONB will be fully considered in accordance with draft policy S7.</p>
20.	<p>Question from Mr Kit Brauholtz to Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan</p>
	<p>I understand that the JCS Officers are now using the ONS "Interim" Ten Year Population Projection (published November 2012), replacing the verified long-term ONS projection published in March 2012. Given that, the ONS has warned that this interim dataset could overestimate the birth rates and secondly, the new projection gives a large overestimate of the natural increase in population (births minus deaths), reference the recent county demographics Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 9th May</p>

	<p>2013, this work showed the annual natural population increase in Gloucestershire was 511 per year to 2011, measured by the 2011 census. The JCS projection estimates a natural increase of population for Gloucester, Tewkesbury & Cheltenham at 960/yr, 160/yr and 610/yr respectively, a total of 1730 per year which is over three times the actual measured rate.</p> <p>Could the Council please say why this interim projection is being used for the JCS?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> <p>The OAN of the JCS is based upon the Interim 2011-based subnational population projections for England. They are the latest official local authority level projections and as such need to be taken into account as part of the evidence base used in determining the housing requirement.</p> <p>The Strategic Housing Market Assessment is currently in draft form and does not form the baseline of the projections of the JCS. The aim is to publish the SHMA before the proposed consultation starts on 15th October 2013 and will be taken into account in developing the final JCS document for submission in 2014.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Mr Brauholtz asked whether the council was aware that the ONS were shocked that the council was using their projections in this way?</p> <p>In response the Leader advised that he couldn't comment on a conversation he wasn't aware of but further analysis of the figures would be a key part of the consultation.</p>
21.	<p>Question from Derek Gott to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan</p>
	<p>Can the public have a guarantee from Cheltenham Borough Council that the JCS still maintains a brownfield first policy and any development on the greenbelt or open countryside will be phased late into the programme and be contingent on the 'return to trend' on the district household formation, economic growth and job creation.</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> <p>Please see response to question 15.</p> <p>The JCS has as one of its strategic objectives "making the best use of previously developed land", and the housing policy supports in principle residential and economic development that comes forward on brownfield sites, so long as it meets other sustainability criteria. It is important to note however that some brownfield sites can be rich in biodiversity and so care must be taken when redevelopment is considered.</p>
22.	<p>Question from Derek Gott to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan</p>
	<p>Social Housing is provided in Cheltenham by Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH), some 5000 in number and very well managed, can the</p>

	Council please provide information and comment on how Cheltenham Borough Homes have been consulted and involved in the JCS in order to meet the assessed need for affordable and social housing to 2031.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	As part of the positive relationship between Cheltenham Borough Council and Cheltenham Borough Homes, there is ongoing involvement and consultation opportunities for a range of strategic issues including the JCS and the Cheltenham Plan. Once the Strategic Housing Market Assessment is finalised CBH will be approached for further discussion. CBH is already involved in development of the Cheltenham Plan through its Officer Working Group which will take forward JCS proposals within the borough. In addition there is regular discussion between CBC and CBH at senior officer, Board and Cabinet level. CBH have both an interest and a role in the future provision of social housing in Cheltenham with a clear intention to continue to provide excellent services on behalf of the people and communities in Cheltenham.

Following the tabled public questions, the Leader advised that the council had received a further set of questions from Swindon Village Parish Council. The number of questions had exceeded the limit and the reduced list of questions had then been received too late to be included. He advised that a separate set of answers had been sent to the Parish Council and following a request from a member he agreed to circulate these to all members of Council.

6. MEMBER QUESTIONS

There were no member questions.

7. NOTICES OF MOTION

None

8. GLOUCESTER, CHELTENHAM AND TEWKESBURY JOINT CORE STRATEGY-DRAFT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Before the main debate the Mayor invited members to ask questions on the report. These questions would then be answered by the Leader or the Head of Planning, Tracey Crews. The questions and responses are detailed below.

- What would be the council's response to any planning applications from developers between now and the establishment of the JCS? Did the emerging document have weight or could the council defer considering any applications?
 - The Head of Planning advised that the council would still be obliged to accept and consider any planning applications. She referred members to paragraph 1.7 in the Leader's report and paragraph 1.8 in the JCS appendix. The draft JCS would be accorded status as a material consideration in any planning

- applications but its weight would be limited as the JCS was not yet at a statutory consultation stage.
- Would the decision to choose the mid term of the range of household formation rates (28,500 to 37,400) be reviewed during the consultation period?
 - This decision and all the statistics used as part of the evidence base would be open to challenge during the consultation phase.
 - Regarding the amended recommendation 3, if there were any subsequent reductions in housing allocations would these be taken from strategic sites rather than other sites.
 - The allocation target for Cheltenham was in the order of 10,000 until 2031 and the Leader's personal view was that if this figure could be reduced then this would be achieved by taking out one of the urban extensions.
 - Would the projections in this document be revised when the new ONS figures were available in the Spring?
 - The Leader could not comment on the other councils but his personal view was that the projections should always be based on the latest information.
 - Referring to the key risks set out in the Leader's covering report, could any more factual evidence be provided to inform members of the consequences of not accepting this JCS document?
 - The council was dealing with new legislation and therefore it was difficult to give a more definitive answer. The Leader's personal view was that if the council did not accept the document then this could create a worse situation not a better one.
 - The Head of Planning added that if Council did not agree the JCS, then with no direction of travel, this would give the opportunity for any application to be submitted in the context of the NPPF and the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The council would have to look positively at each application. The council needed to be mindful of the specific guidance given by the government minister to the three councils at a meeting earlier that week.
 - The penultimate paragraph on page 28 refers to "an increased risk of speculative planning applications" – in Cheltenham's case, isn't this because we do not have an up-to-date Local Plan?
 - The Head of Planning advised that Cheltenham had agreed to enter collaborative working via the JCS and it was through this plan that housing requirements and strategic allocations needed to be made. The council therefore needs to progress the JCS as quickly as possible in order to control speculative planning applications.
 - Reference the third paragraph on page 38 "In the absence of a 5 year supply of housing land", what weight should councillors give to this statement when a joint letter dated 22nd November 2012 to the developer of the Kidnappers/Farm Lane proposed development stated that "CBC does not consider that it has under-delivered in the provision of housing and that it has a shortfall of 315 housing when compared against the Draft RSS requirements, and considers it has met its housing requirements under the Gloucestershire Structure Plan."

- With the permissions granted since November 2012 to the present day, would it be wrong for councillors and the general public to believe that even the shortfall of 315 houses would have been met by now?
 - The Head of Planning advised that the draft RSS (proposed changes) currently referred to a need for 8100 homes within the borough boundary – this figure excludes the urban extensions outside the administrative area of Cheltenham. currently we were working with a five-year land supply as set out in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). Once the JCS was in place this would replace the RSS.
 - The Head of Planning advised council that we should not confuse housing requirements of the RSS with that of the JCS; the JCS provides a new baseline starting from 2011 and ending 2031. The JCS now identified 10,000 new homes for Cheltenham which the strategy would deliver through development within the urban area together with urban extensions. Given that 3 of the urban extensions were wholly or in part within Tewkesbury Borough, Tewkesbury would be helping to facilitate Cheltenham’s housing needs.
- The recent Briefing Note informs us that “In the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan, Cheltenham’s housing supply continues to be monitored against the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy figure of 8,100 dwellings between 2006 and 2026 (This equates to 405 dwellings per year). The JCS minute reported that during the period June 2006 and April 2013, 4,400 dwellings had been constructed or planning permissions granted, which equates to 628 dwellings per year, or 52 per month. If the same pattern continues to 2031 (JCS 20 year period) something like 11,311 dwellings will be constructed. Can you tell me where the proposal for 10,000 dwellings for the Cheltenham area fits into the equation? What is the housing requirement figure after the deductions and how do the two periods of time fit together?
 - The Head of Planning referred members to Policy SP2 on page 29 of the JCS document and highlighted that the 10,000 new homes requirement included all completions and commitments since 2011, commitments together with a windfall figure – windfalls are those sites which come forward which cannot be anticipated. Cheltenham has a firm history of such sites being delivered and as such the JCS had made an assumption of 54 per year.
- How, where and when would the consultation events take place referred to on page 7 of the document?
 - A timetable of consultation events would be produced in due course. The publication of the document today provided the public with a head start and more time to read and digest the information before these took place.
- What are the population projections for 2031 for each of the three districts in the JCS area?
 - The Head of Planning advised that the JCS was currently based upon interim population projections from ONS figures for a 10 year period from 2011-2021 and not a two-year period as was suggested in one of the earlier public questions. Long-term projections were expected in Spring 2014 and the DCLG had already published new guidance on their website on the strategy

for dealing with the new projected figures. The council will continue to use the latest population projections and revise them as new information becomes available from ONS. These could be circulated when available.

- What consideration had been given to the senior schools infrastructure needed to support families in the wider Leckhampton area if the development went ahead?
 - The strategic planning unit at the county council had already done some work and had not raised any specific concerns at this stage however this was an area for further detailed work. The infrastructure delivery plan would be made available on the website as soon as it was completed.
- Will a computer generated traffic simulation be available during the public consultation?
 - The Head of Planning advised that the JCS councils had commissioned traffic modelling through the County Council to consider both individual sites and corridors between sites. This was technically detailed work and a user-friendly simulation would not be available during this stage of public consultation. However this could be considered for the next stage.
- How would the Neighbourhood Plan produced by Leckhampton and Warden Hill Parish Council be inputted into the JCS or the Local Plan process?
 - This would provide a useful input to the consultation stage of the JCS. The Head of Planning advised that the quickest route for the Parish Council would be to deal with the information set out in the Neighbourhood Plan as part of the JCS process.
- How likely was it that there would be changes to the JCS document?
 - The Leader advised that it was a genuine consultation. The document was not the final version and they would be prepared to make changes where necessary.
- Why was the Green Belt movement around the racecourse necessary as it was not a strategic site?
 - The Leader advised that the changes were recommended as a minor tidy up to avoid any confusion in the future regarding this area as there had been some in the past.
- In a briefing to the Conservative Members, the Chief Executive had reassured members that safeguarded areas would be protected from housing or economic development but that it would still be possible to build a road through them. Could this result in a new distribution road west of Hester's Way and Springbank?
 - The Head of Planning advised that this had not been raised by county council officers or by county council members at the JCS Program Board and therefore was not being considered at this time. If a proposal did come forward it would require planning consent outside of the JCS process.
- Given the dependencies on so many other documents still to be published would it be wise to amend the resolutions being considered today to make them contingent on these results.
 - The Leader advised that this was an informal consultation. They could have waited until all the missing information was in place but that would have denied the public this extra opportunity to

comment on the JCS at this stage. He would be reluctant to amend the resolutions as they had been agreed across the three councils.

- If the vast majority of the public reject the JCS proposals what would be the next step?
 - The Leader stressed that the public consultation was not a referendum. There was an imperative for the council to have a JCS in plan to demonstrate needs and how they intended to meet those needs and a decision would be made on that basis.

The Council adjourned for tea from 15.45 until 16.10 pm.

The Leader introduced the report on the draft Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy for public consultation. The report summarised the draft JCS and sought Council approval to publish the document for public consultation. He thanked officers for their hard work in bringing together the evidence and members for their contributions at the member working group and seminars. He explained that the document before members represented a non statutory consultation with the statutory consultation on the final JCS to be issued in the Spring 2014. He informed members that Tewkesbury BC had approved the document, with Gloucester City due to consider it on 12 September.

The Leader highlighted the difficult balances to be addressed. Firstly, the JCS had to address housing shortages whilst protecting the AONB and the Green Belt. Secondly, there was a need for a sound plan and this was dictated by the National Planning Policy framework which had been introduced since the last Council debate on the JCS. This required councils to objectively assess the need for development (whilst allowing for migration and economic growth) and to demonstrate how to meet that need. Whilst expert advice had been sought there were still queries. The Inspector would determine whether the JCS was sound and it would not be implemented if it was not. Thirdly, he highlighted the joint working of the three Councils which was, in his view, a sensible approach. He recognised that each council had different priorities but it would be a high risk strategy for Cheltenham to approach this on its own.

The Leader acknowledged that there were some gaps in the documentation to complete the evidence. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which covered the whole of Gloucestershire and which was needed to develop the policy for affordable housing should be published imminently. Affordable housing was vital to address the local need. The Infrastructure Development Plan was being worked on county wide and would be made available before the start of the statutory consultation. This would help introduce the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which was needed to fund the work needed. Finally, a viability study was being commissioned which would determine what could be funded.

In terms of priorities, the Leader highlighted the brownfield first policy. Whilst this could not be enforced, it could be proactively encouraged. It was assumed that there would be 4400 new houses in urban Cheltenham which included those already built and approved, potential sites and windfall opportunities. The SHMA was undertaking further work with regard to what could be achieved. The

infrastructure for phased development of new extensions would be put in place as that happened. The progress of the JCS would be reviewed every 5 years.

The Leader emphasised the following concerns :

- Objectively Assessed Need - this was an important part of the consultation and additional work had been undertaken to get the best estimate. There was a query about whether the latest data had been used and this would be reviewed during the consultation. In terms of the demographic estimate this was 28,500 homes across the whole JCS area; the higher economic projection was 37,400 homes. The recommendation of 33,200 homes assumed a "return to trend" of household formation. This must be a sound figure.
- Traffic - there was a need to ensure this was properly included and it was recognised that there was more work to be done.
- Sites - most sites would be urban extensions around Cheltenham and Gloucester although there could be strategic sites. The Cheltenham target was 10,000 and the current allocation was 10,850; given the sensitivities it was important that this did not mean overprovision and the final consultation should take this on board.
- Cheltenham countryside - it was inevitable that this could not be totally preserved if need was to be met but the proposals still meant that 100 % of the AONB and 80 % of the Green Belt would be protected.
- Ministerial visit - Nick Boles, Planning Minister had welcomed the joint working between the three councils and had highlighted that Objectively Assessed Need took priority over the Green Belt. He would support the 5 year supply if one council had a temporary issue.

The Leader then referred members to the recommendations. He believed it was important to give the public a say and highlighted that there would be further consultation next spring. He pointed out the additional recommendation 3 which were designed to address any concerns about possible overprovision in Cheltenham and to some extent in Tewkesbury and allowed future adjustments to be made. He was pleased that all three councils had been able to support the addition of this recommendation.

He concluded by encouraging members to support the document going out for public consultation even if they had personal doubts. The consultation would enable the document to be scrutinised and for opinions and views to be put forward and considered. The alternative, if the document was not agreed, was to open the door to speculative development. He acknowledged that it was a very difficult decision for all members but it was his personal view that a better solution would be achieved by all three councils working together.

A member acknowledged the hard work of officers and the JCS member steering group but could not accept the proposed number of homes required for the borough. He feared that there could be oversupply of housing which would jeopardise the Green Belt which should only be taken in exceptional circumstances. He believed that delaying the JCS with the consequence of speculative development was a risk worth taking.

Councillor Smith proposed the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Chard:

An additional recommendation 4.

That the document to be submitted to a public consultation be amended to remove site A6 Leckhampton and site A7 Up Hatherley as identified sites for development.

In proposing the amendment, Councillor Smith first wished to thank the officers across all three authorities for the work they had done in getting the JCS to this stage. He felt the Leader had given too many excuses and this document should not have been brought forward to Council for approval if it was not fit for purpose and the Leader had reservations. It was clear to him that people in Cheltenham did not want this housing and these proposals would not keep Cheltenham special and unique.

A member spoke in support of the amendment. They were deeply concerned about the potential traffic congestion in Leckhampton. They referred to a recent traffic report from a highways officer who commented that the traffic network was already broken and could not be corrected through mitigating actions. The parish councils of Leckhampton and Warden Hill and Shurdington had produced new evidence on this issue. It was essential that further modelling was done before any developments could be considered and therefore Leckhampton should be taken out at this stage.

Another member was concerned about the 800 houses proposed for Up Hatherley on Green Belt land which had come as a shock to local residents. They had already received 30 letters of objections from local residents. Further concern was expressed about flooding risks from development on the white land at Leckhampton.

Another member spoke against the amendment. It was important for the administration to take some responsibility and the proposed amendment reneged on the tentative levels of the agreement that had already been achieved. The NPPF established a new growth-driven concept of planning which meant that the plan had to respond to projections of what population growth, demographic change and economic growth would be. He reported that the Planning minister who had met the three Council leaders had said that it was not acceptable to fail to provide for Objectively Assessed Needed on the basis of the existence of the Green Belt. The member believed that if the council did not have a plan then it would be totally at the mercy of developers; it was therefore imperative that a JCS and a Local Plan was in place to protect neighbourhoods.

Another member was concerned that to pass this amendment would effectively be a resignation from the JCS process and would not protect the land at Up Hatherley. The site is within Tewkesbury Borough, they would be likely to continue the JCS process and allocate the housing figures to their needs rather than Cheltenham's. This in turn would result in a shortfall of 2000 properties for Cheltenham which would have to be found elsewhere in the town. He considered the amendment was at best naïve and at worst dishonest and would result in development by appeal. Any plan would be declared as unsound by the Inspector if it ignored expert evidence on population growth and had not considered all applications sites.

Other members spoke against the amendment. One member stated that elected representatives had to be responsible but this amendment was an attempt to derail the JCS process which was irresponsible. If adopted it would fail to give a contribution from Cheltenham to the JCS. Another member talked of honesty in the process and members needed to recognise that the housing need had to be filled. Concern was expressed by another member that if this amendment was supported it could lead to other developments which would impact on communities to a greater degree. This amendment was not the solution. Some members viewed the amendment as parochial and disingenuous and there were no alternatives. If the JCS was not adopted there would be planning by appeal. Cheltenham would be vulnerable and there would be more encroachment on to the green belt.

A member supported the amendment and expressed his disappointment that Up Hatherley had been included in the proposals at the eleventh hour. He expressed concern about the proposals to develop in the green belt and referred to the reducing gap between Gloucester and Cheltenham. He had become increasingly disenchanted with the JCS process as it had advanced despite recognising its progress at the outset. Another member believed it was inappropriate to send the proposals out for consultation prior to receiving and considering the Saturn modelling. The infrastructure in these particular areas was already at its limit in his view. It was recognised that difficult decisions needed to be made but all information should be made available to have an informed debate.

Councillor Chard said he had no hesitation in seconding the amendment. He had promised residents that there would be no development on Leckhampton and he intended to keep to his promises .

In his summing up, the proposer of the amendment, Councillor Smith, said that he had been promising to protect the Green Belt for over 10 years and this was a matter of personal integrity.

Councillor Jordan, in responding to the amendment, said that passing the amendment would destroy the JCS agreement which would result in the risk of development in Leckhampton being increased not decreased. The government had made it very clear that if the council failed to have plans in place to meet needs then they would have no credibility.

Upon a vote the amendment was LOST.
Voting: For 9, Against 19 with 6 Abstentions.

Councillor Bickerton proposed the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Godwin:

He proposed an additional recommendation 4 that

JCS sites and housing targets are contingent on;

- *Updated and verified ONS population projections*
- *final Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)*
- *Saturn traffic modelling for all sites*

- *consideration of input from Parish councils in the form of Neighbourhood Planning documents, NPPF Local Green Space applications and existing Town and Village Green Applications*
- *the council has a policy of brown field sites first in the consideration of planning applications*

In proposing the amendment Councillor Bickerton considered it was a light touch to the document which would make the resolutions contingent on having the data available. He had been informed by the ONS that the population projections were interim projections only and thus only valid for 2 years. He therefore believed that these statistics needed to be right to ensure that the evidence base was there before sites were being proposed on the Green Belt. In seconding the amendment, Councillor Godwin emphasised that it would be foolish not to take heed of the expert's advice.

Some members recognised that these were valid points which should be taken on board prior to the final JCS document being submitted to the Minister. In respect of the brownfield first policy it was noted that brownfield land no longer had the same mandatory force in the NPPF.

In response to statements by members, the Head of Planning said that the revised ONS data would be reconsidered once it became available, the traffic modelling data would be fed in to the statutory consultation, input from the Parish Councils would be considered as part of the consultation and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment would be available imminently.

A member made a statement that in the absence of key evidence the JCS consultation, if approved, could be open to judicial review as it was a flawed process. In response, the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer confirmed that the document before Members was a voluntary stage consultation. Account would be taken of all the evidence gathered in this process together with objections raised. The Council was expected to act reasonably and conduct a statutory consultation in due course and, provided this was undertaken on sound grounds, the JCS would be considered to be a fair process.

In his summing up, Councillor Bickerton, said that he understood the need to keep the JCS process going and the amendment he was proposing was light touch only and simply requested more work to be done. He considered it represented due diligence in the council's handling of its JCS.

In responding to the amendment, Councillor Jordan was sympathetic but could not support the amendment as they could lose control of the process if it was made contingent on other factors.

Upon a vote the amendment was LOST.
Voting: For 8, Against 20 with 5 Abstentions.

Councillor Prince proposed the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Stennett.

He proposed an additional recommendation 4

To keep the existing Green Belt boundary around Cheltenham Racecourse.

In proposing this amendment, Councillor Prince referred to the Hunting Butts planning application and highlighted that the inspector had emphasised the open aspect of the racecourse which needed to be protected.

In seconding the amendment, Councillor Stennett stressed that this area was not a strategic site and was an important area to preserve.

A member highlighted the AERC Green Belt review undertaken in March 2007 which had recommended that the Green Belt surrounding the racecourse should be maintained. The racecourse played a vital role in Cheltenham. In response to comments the Head of Planning highlighted that this was purely a “tidying up exercise” and the NPPF stated that amendments could only be made to the greenbelt at a strategic point of plan making, i.e. in this case the JCS.

In his summing up, Councillor Prince again questioned why this small parcel of land had been included in the JCS. It may appear insignificant but it could lead to development around the whole perimeter of the racecourse as there would be no basis on which to refuse planning applications once the site was outside of the Green Belt.

Councillor Jordan said he had no strong views but still felt it was a relatively minor change and the professional opinion was that the Green Belt boundary needed to be clearer in this area. He suggested that the JCS was put out to consultation and it would be possible to take out that area depending on the feedback.

Responding to a request for further clarification, The Head of Planning advised that the boundary change had been made as it had been inconsistent and had been compromised in the past.

Upon a vote the amendment was LOST.
Voting: For 10, Against 19 with 3 Abstentions.

As there were no further amendments, the Mayor invited members to debate the substantive motion.

A member highlighted that at every stage of the JCS to date Councillors had questioned the methodology which was being used. The estimated housing requirement of 33,400 was complex and in his view the key point was that the requirement could not be predicted with confidence. The common sense approach would be to proceed with caution and if estimates were too low more development could take place. Whilst he agreed that having a strategy was preferable to not having a strategy, he was of the opinion that the consultation proposals were far removed from what the residents of Cheltenham wanted. He believed that the views of local residents on previous options documents had been ignored and the current document before members served no practical purpose. He would therefore be voting against the draft as a matter of conscience.

A member expressed their concern with regard to the over-reliance and emphasis on urban extensions into the Green Belt, as opposed to medium

sized new settlements. They questioned the proposed housing figures which in his mind were a disingenuous assumption, mid-way between the Cambridge expert's top figure of 37,400 and his demographic only figure of 28,500. He believed that the figure to be chosen within that range was a question of one's view on the levels of future economic recovery, and the extent to which household formations would revert to previous trends. He paid tribute to the hard work of officers but expressed disappointment that the reports had not always reflected members' intentions, the latest example being not putting green buffers between new and existing housing. He highlighted the importance of revisiting data sets used for calculating demographic projections during the consultation. He believed that the Cheltenham housing allocation should be no more than 10,000 and the reduction should come from the strategic sites. There was no mention in the document to a commitment to a minimum quantum or percentage in relation to affordable housing, nor to data with regard to infrastructure. There was also no commitment to the proportions of 2, 3, 4 and 5 bed properties in the context of housing density size and mix.

A member highlighted that the consultation would be an opportunity for debate and challenge but this had to be meaningful.

A member expressed his concern about the removal of land from the Green Belt and the lack of evidence of employment growth. In his view the Council would have no control over development in the long term. He believed this did not constitute a viable proposal in view of the absence of all the elements, including vital infrastructure plans.

A member made reference to the Green Belt reviews which had been undertaken by AERC and AMEC and which stated that land should only be taken from the Green Belt in very exceptional circumstances. He believed that the proposals outlined in the consultation document ignored established fact. Green belt land must have a defensible boundary, a principle which was supported by the NPPF, in order to prevent urban sprawl and keep land permanently open. AMEC had suggested that the land at Leckhampton should be clarified as Green Belt land because of its openness and importance to Cheltenham as a town. He expressed that he would be voting against the proposals.

A member highlighted that Council needed the full facts in order to make a decision. He had no confidence in the proposals for consultation as they currently stood and would be voting against them.

A member paid tribute to the good work which had been completed by officers on employment land to date. It was important that the JCS was approved so that a local plan could be adopted which would address current issues of concern. He highlighted that the JCS would be reviewed every five years and the figures would be under constant review. If a plan was in place then development could be planned for; evidence would be required for the numbers to be changed as endorsed by the Minister.

A member recognised the consequences of rejecting the proposals but could not support them. They felt that an informed decision could not be made without all the available evidence. Working with Tewkesbury BC and Gloucester City had been a difficult process and they felt that Cheltenham was being

disempowered. They highlighted the need for community space and more green infrastructure and also believed that objectively assessed need should be driven by a bottom up approach.

The Mayor advised members that Council had been in session for over four hours. Upon a vote, members voted to continue the meeting.

A member emphasised the chronic shortage of affordable housing in Cheltenham. 10,000 people were in inappropriate housing across the JCS area. The choice was between planned and unplanned development and the impact of this on the quality of life of residents. He highlighted the importance of maintaining green buffers between settlements.

In his summing up, Councillor Jordan, acknowledged the general feeling that the assessment needs set out in the JCS may be too high. The public consultation was not a referendum but did provide an opportunity to challenge the evidence base and the council would continue to do that. He agreed that the green buffers referred to in the debate were crucial for the quality of life of residents and that would be further explored during the consultation. He agreed that there were missing elements of infrastructure funding but this funding could only be secured through following the JCS process. The community infrastructure levy would only be payable if the council had a robust plan in place. In conclusion he highlighted that having debated the report in detail it was now a key moment for members to make their decision. In his view the best thing for Cheltenham was to maintain the JCS process and the team effort between three councils. The worst outcome would be for this joint working to break up.

Upon 7 members standing in their seats, a recorded vote was requested and agreed.

Upon a vote it was resolved that

- 1. The draft Joint Core Strategy be approved for public consultation**
- 2. Authority be delegated to the Chief Executives in consultation with the Lead Member and the JCS Member Steering Group, to make any necessary minor amendments as considered appropriate by the three JCS Councils prior to publication.**
- 3. The JCS Authorities note that, through housing allocations and expected supply across the plan period, the Draft Joint Core Strategy meets the needs of the three authorities as a whole.**

However, taken individually the needs of each authority are not exactly matched with the supply of homes the Joint Core Strategy is expected to deliver for each area.

Following consultation and taking account of additional evidence produced during this period, housing and employment allocations will be reviewed to improve this relationship between need and supply for each area.

Voting:

For; 20 - Councillors Barnes, Britter, Coleman, Driver, Fletcher, Flynn, Harman, Colin Hay, Rowena Hay, Jeffries, Jordan, McCloskey, McKinlay, Rawson, Reid, Seacome, Stewart, Thornton, Walklett, and Wheeler.

Against; 13 – Councillors Bickerton, Chard, Fisher, Godwin, Hibbert, Massey, Prince, Regan, Smith, Stennett, Sudbury, Wall, and Whyborn.

Abstentions; 1 – Councillor Hall

9. ANY OTHER ITEM THE MAYOR DETERMINES AS URGENT AND WHICH REQUIRES A DECISION

No such items.

Wendy Flynn
Chair