What is the purpose of this consultation?

This is an early stage of consultation, which is asking for your views and comments on the following topic areas:

- Cheltenham’s Economy;
- Local Green Spaces; and
- Small to medium sites for housing and employment (to support the needs already identified in the Joint Core Strategy).

This consultation identifies a number of policy options and possible sites. These are only suggestions at this stage and for this reason we are really keen to hear what you’ve got to say about these topics. Your comments and suggestions are vitally important to help influence the Cheltenham Plan and ultimately it’s a great way to help leave your mark on the town.

Public Consultation - Have your say

We are holding a six week public consultation from 22nd June to 3rd August 2015 on the content of the Cheltenham Plan Issues and Options (part one).

We would like you to consider the content of this important document as well as supporting evidence and let us know what you think.

Please read the document and return a questionnaire with your comments to the Planning Policy team. The document can be viewed at www.cheltenham.gov.uk/cheltenhamplan and at local libraries and community partnerships in the area.

Today’s exhibition

Today’s exhibition gives you the opportunity to learn more about the key elements of the Cheltenham Plan.

This briefly explains how we got to this stage, includes a map of the proposed site allocations for your area, and tells you where we go from here.

Allocating sites for future development is a difficult task and we will not be able to please everyone.

We want your input to help guide the Cheltenham Plan to the draft plan stage. It should be noted that decisions cannot be made on the public response alone - we must also consider the technical evidence gathered.

Our aim is to find the best sites in the Borough in the right locations to meet our development needs, on behalf of all members of the community.
What is the Cheltenham Plan?

It is a daughter document to the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and will provide locally specific policies that will complement and add detail to the JCS. The JCS sets out the main policies to support growth for Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury over the period 2011 to 2031. For example the JCS identifies the need for 9,100 new homes and 23.4 hectares of new employment land. The Cheltenham Plan aims to support these types of development requirements by identifying smaller sites as well as update development management policies found in the adopted Local Plan.

The Cheltenham will be delivered in two parts. Part one seeks to identify land in the Borough (further to that already proposed by the Joint Core Strategy) for new homes and employment. It also seeks to safeguard existing employment sites and land for local green space. The relationship of the Cheltenham Plan to other development planning documents and guidance is shown below.

Why does the Cheltenham Plan introduce more policies?

- The Joint Core Strategy identifies the strategic (important) policies for Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury, however more locally specific policies and sites are missing;
- The Government has reduced national planning policy guidance into two documents called the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG). We need new policies to meet new NPPF and NPPG requirements and to fill any gaps created; and
- We also need to replace all the remaining ‘Saved’ Policies from the Cheltenham Borough district wide Local Plan (2006).
Evidence Base
The content of the Issues and Options document was informed by the studies, reports and documents set out below:

- **Joint Core Strategy** a strategic Development Plan Document for the area;
- **Cheltenham Plan scoping consultation** in Summer 2013;
- **Strategic Assessment of Land Availability (SALA)** - An annual publication that considers the suitability and capacity of potential sites for housing;
- **Cheltenham Economic Strategy** - This is a technical study that assessed the role of Cheltenham as a business location. It advocates possible options, ideas and actions for the Council to consider;
- **Sustainability Appraisal Framework** - provides a method of examining sites and policies to ensure they are contributing to the achievement of sustainable development;
- **The AONB study** - An assessment of landscape character, sensitivity and capacity of the Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), within Cheltenham Borough;
- **Local Green Space Study** - Cheltenham Borough Council working with Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) has released a report pinpointing the green areas of particular importance to local parishes and neighbourhood groups; and
- **Annual monitoring reports** - Provides an annual update on the supply of new houses, employment and retail premises. Generally published in the summer.

These and other documents are available to view on the Council’s website www.cheltenham.gov.uk and at deposit locations, such as local libraries. The evidence base will continue to develop and advance as the Plan progress.
The Cheltenham Economic Strategy document helps to establish the main issues affecting Cheltenham’s economy. This allows us to investigate the possible approaches and options available through the planning system to help deliver transformational growth in Cheltenham.

There are at least three possible types of policy approaches that can seek to remedy the issues. All options add further detail to the spatial strategy and policies found in the Joint Core Strategy. These options are not exclusive of each other and could be taken forward together. These are:

**APPROACH A: Safeguarding existing and future employment land**

The simplest and most typical localised addition to the Joint Core Strategy is to identify and protect local areas of employment. The Council currently operates a policy of safeguarding all existing employment land in Cheltenham, where development that results in the loss of office (B1), industrial (B2) or warehousing (B8) land or buildings is not permitted. The policy options are:

- **OPTION 1:** Continue with general protection of office, industrial and storage space (B uses only) as established by adopted local plan policy EM2;
- **OPTION 2:** Amend the general policy of B uses only (as established by adopted Local Plan policy EM2) to allow other forms of economic development.
- **OPTION 3:** Protect the best and evaluate the rest

**APPROACH B: Promoting one type of industry over another**

There is a need to balance the growth of the economy with the protection of the Cheltenham’s high quality environment and to this end the Council could introduce a policy of promoting one or several types of industry over another. This policy would therefore favour uses that have an essential need for a Cheltenham location. The policy options are:

- **OPTION 4:** Introduce selective management of Cheltenham’s economy
- **OPTION 5:** No policy intervention

**APPROACH C: Promoting a Cyber Security cluster**

Cheltenham, Great Malvern and Hereford are now recognised as the UK’s Cyber Valley and it is a growing centre for the research, development and commercialisation of cyber-security products and services.

National guidance supports local planning authorities to plan positively for the location, promotion and expansion of clusters or networks of knowledge driven industries. So the Council could look to support a growing and high technology global industry. The objective of this policy approach would therefore be to assist the Council to implement a cyber security business initiative. The policy options are:

- **OPTION 6:** Introduce a cyber security cluster
- **OPTION 7:** Do not promote cluster development
Identifying and Safeguarding sites

Housing & Employment

This consultation seeks to establish which sites should be:

1. allocated for housing (including Gypsy and Travellers), employment and commercial development;
2. safeguarded for employment / economic uses only; and
3. designated as a Local Green Space.

Other planning topics such as retail, built environment, natural environment, heritage, tourism, culture and recreation and housing will be consulted on at a later stage.

The map shows all possible housing, employment and local green space sites within Cheltenham that we so far are aware of. The purpose of this consultation to hear your views and help us identify the best sites to allocate to meet future needs and tell us if we’ve missed any.

To help, we undertook a RAG (red, amber green) assessment of housing and employment sites which looked at basic planning criteria to establish an early indication of its suitability.

Existing employment sites

Employment maps identify a range of sites across Cheltenham that have an existing employment use. Depending on the preferred employment policy approach, your comments along with supporting evidence will help to identify which existing employment sites in Cheltenham should be safeguarded.

The Council has created a site typology and completed a strength, weakness, opportunities and threat (SWOT) analysis against type of employment site. See table for further details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site suitability</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Light Green</strong></td>
<td>Currently has planning permission to build dwellings or employment premises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dark Green</strong></td>
<td>Has the greatest potential to be allocated for development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amber</strong></td>
<td>Has potential but there may be issues which need to be resolved, or the site may not be in such a favoured location as those highlighted in green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Red</strong></td>
<td>Is not considered suitable for allocation for development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Local Green Space

Cheltenham Borough Council already protects existing open spaces in the adopted local plan and will continue to do so in the Joint Core Strategy. National planning guidance now allows communities to identify and propose the designation of local green spaces.

Cheltenham Borough Council commissioned Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) to work with parishes and neighbourhood forums within the borough to help identify and analysis suitable Local Green Spaces sites. This began in October 2014 and concluded in January 2015.

We seek your views on the 29 sites identified by the Local Green Spaces study and to also establish if there are any other areas that should also be considered. Please refer to the documents and maps on the table for further details and site location.

What is Local Green Space?

- The meaning of a local green space is set out in the NPPF;
- It is a designation that should only be applied in special circumstances and should not be applied to most green area or open space; and
- It is defined as a space that is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves; where it is demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including playing fields), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and where it is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.
A Local Green Space policy needs to be considered within the Council’s wider environmental objectives. Part one of the Plan focuses exclusively on the ‘Local Green Spaces’ and its implications, whereas part two of the Plan will examine in greater detail how it can support the provision, maintenance and continued investment in Cheltenham’s high quality public realm, including formal and informal green spaces and private gardens.

A number of Local Green Space sites have been submitted within the boundaries of emerging Joint Core Strategy strategic allocations at Leckhampton and North West Cheltenham. Where this occurs the Joint Core Strategy Public Examination will consider these submissions. The Cheltenham Plan must be in conformity with the Joint Core Strategy on adoption. Therefore it is through the Joint Core Strategy examination process that these submissions will be tested.

Most of the ‘Local Green Space’ sites submitted to the Council are already subject to planning protection to varying degrees so it is appropriate to ask if the new designation is right for each of the locations or if other places would be more suitable for the ‘upgraded’ protection.

**Policy Options include:**

- **OPTION 8:** Allocate all designated ‘Public Green Spaces’ as ‘Local Green Spaces’;
- **OPTION 9:** Maintain existing local ‘Public Green Spaces’ and only allocate ‘Local Green Spaces’ that meet the Framework’s criteria; and
- **OPTION 10:** Maintain existing approach of designating local ‘Public Green Spaces’.
What are the implications of not preparing a Cheltenham Plan?

- We will not be able to fully address our employment and housing needs (something the Government requires us to do);
- It makes it more difficult to plan properly for infrastructure (new school places, road improvements, health care, etc);
- Developers will take the lead on where developments happen—not the Council and the community; and
- Saved policies in the adopted Local Plan will become increasingly out of date making it difficult for the Council to protect and safeguard local assets, and influence future development.

How do I get involved?

The document, questionnaire, maps and supporting evidence can be found on our online consultation system at [http://consult.cheltenham.gov.uk](http://consult.cheltenham.gov.uk).

When answering the questions you may find it helpful to refer to the site forms and maps, specifically ones relating to potential site allocations (sites for development) and safeguarding sites for employment or local green space.

To help us process comments in a timely manner we highly recommend you to register and submit your comments online.

Registering online at [http://consult.cheltenham.gov.uk](http://consult.cheltenham.gov.uk) allows:

- you to be kept informed of future consultations;
- you to save and review draft responses before submitting, making it easier for you to manage your representations; and
- us to analyse representations quicker and incorporate suggestions into the Plan.

Alternatively you can send your responses using one of the following methods:

- Email: localplan@cheltenham.gov.uk
- Post: Cheltenham Borough Council (planning policy), PO Box 12, Municipal Offices, Promenade, Cheltenham, GL50 1PP

Responses must be received no later than 5pm on Monday 3 August 2015.

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What happens next?

- Report and publish the results of the issues and options
- Pre-submission consultation projected to be during Winter 2015
- Submission to the Secretary of State projected to during Winter and Spring 2016
- Examination Projected to be during Spring 2016
- Adoption Projected to be during Summer 2016.