

Design Action for South Gloucestershire Council

Introduction + Context

**New Local Plan Strategic Development Locations
Consultation Report – SECTION 1**



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- 1.1 For ease of reference this report is published as a collection of documents, gathered into four Sections:

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Introduction

The Aim of the Consultation

- 2.1 South Gloucestershire Council is tasked with preparing a new Local Plan which will cover the period 2018 to 2036. The South Gloucestershire Local Plan will need to be in conformity with the Joint Spatial Plan (JSP), which is being produced by the four West of England councils (South Glos, Bristol City, Bath & North East Somerset and North Somerset). The JSP will identify areas known as Strategic Development Locations (SDLs), which will describe where larger scale growth should happen to accommodate growing populations and the need for space to build businesses and employment opportunities. The Joint Spatial Plan which is the subject of a parallel process currently identifies five locations in South Gloucestershire: Charfield, Coalpit Heath, Buckover Garden Village, Thornbury, Yate and Chipping Sodbury, as potentially suitable and sustainable locations for new strategic development in the current draft JSP.
- 2.2 Wisely, the Council wish to be in a position to proceed swiftly with the formation of the new Local Plan once the Joint Spatial Plan is agreed and adopted. The purpose of these consultation events was therefore to begin a dialogue with the local communities and engage them in some early thinking about the form and character of the new neighbourhoods, if they do come forwards as firm development sites.
- 2.3 The JSP process is not yet complete and final decisions have not been made about the Strategic Development Locations. However, the council wanted to start the conversation with communities to ask, if there is growth, what do they want it to look like and what infrastructure and community facilities should be delivered alongside new housing or

business premises? The council is also aware that already there is developer interest in some of the locations, and it is important to begin the early thinking about the master-planning of new neighbourhoods in consultation with local and community interests. This is in order to avoid piecemeal and un-coordinated development that may not then deliver the benefits of good place-making and investment in necessary infrastructure. It can also give the Council a ‘stronger hand’ in resisting inappropriate proposals in advance of a robust master-planning process.

- 2.4 In order to help them to conceive, organise and facilitate the consultation, South Gloucestershire Council invited Design Action¹ to partner with them in providing the series of events. This now is our independent report capturing the findings and setting out some recommendations that arise from them.

The Nature of the Events

- 3.1 Five events were held in local venues close to the Strategic Development Locations. A single event held in Chipping Sodbury dealt both with the site adjacent to the town and also with the land to the North West + West of nearby Yate.
- 3.2 Each event consisted of an interactive exhibition and then ‘table-top’ workshops in order to map and explore spatial ideas about the possible new neighbourhoods.
- 3.3 The exhibition invited the attendees to supply basic information about where they lived, worked and what their age group was, in order that we could understand the general demographic profile of those that came along.
- 3.4 The interactive exhibition boards then invited people to explain what was ‘good’ and ‘not so good’ about the existing place.
- 3.5 Further boards asked people to consider what should be the aspirations for the future, and, what sort of public and private investment would be needed to deliver a sustainable community. The latter, by a simple technique of inviting participants to allot ‘pretend’ money to what they thought were the most important areas of expenditure.
- 3.6 The results of these interactions have been analysed and presented for each location in the Section 2 reports (set out under sub-sections 4 to 7).
- 3.7 In the ‘table-top’ workshops then conversations were encouraged based on maps of the place – in order to plot, spatially, some of the key ideas and concerns, and also to explore options to do with layout, anatomy and shape of the new development. The embryonic

¹ Design Action is an independent ‘not for profit’ organisation established in 2005 to promote good design and better place-making and to support and encourage public participation in the processes that shape the built environment. It is the host to the Architecture Centre Devon and Cornwall but supports projects across the wider South West region - see www.acdandc.org

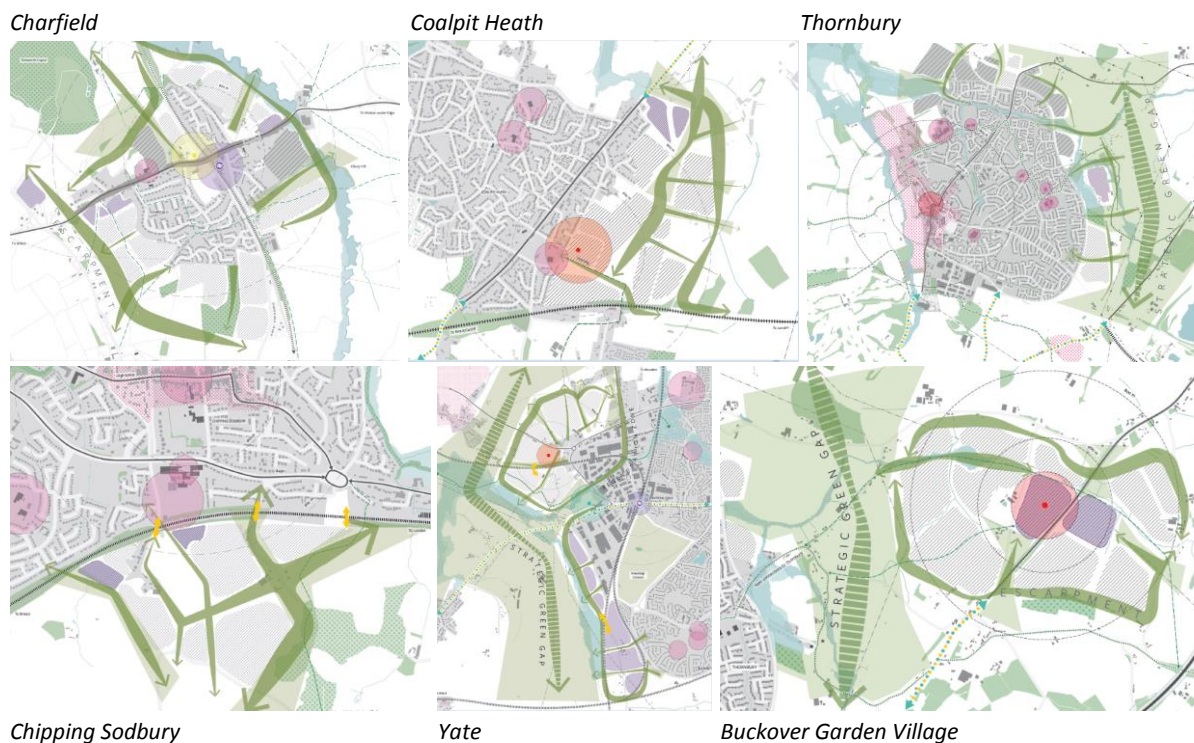
‘Concept Diagram’ drawings for each place (as drafted within the Joint Spatial Plan) formed an initial starting point for these discussions.

- 3.8 The drawings and notes produced for each location are captured under the “Drawing on...” component of the Section 2 reports for each place – paragraphs 8.1 onwards.
- 3.9 Participants seemed to enjoy and respond well to the variety of means for testing opinion and eliciting ideas – generally there was strong engagement, with some attendees staying at the events for long periods of time.
- 3.10 Other relevant documents and studies were available at each event and able to be consulted as necessary. Local Authority Officers were also in attendance to help facilitate the events and with some specialist officers available to answer specific questions.
- 3.11 Whilst it was made very clear that the consultation was not about the ‘principle’ of the proposals (that was for the Joint Spatial Plan consultation to determine) it is natural and inevitable that a large number of participants were still keen to comment upon whether they thought development should be allowed at all. This is faithfully reflected in the feedback, but it is the positive actions/ideas that might influence the type of new place to be created that we wish to properly capture and highlight in order that it can inform the practical recommendations that we make (sub-sections 9 to 11) for each location. These recommendations are, in the main, broad and ‘high level’ – reflecting the (still) early stage of development of the initiatives.
- 3.12 In section 3 of this report we make some observations that apply more generally to the challenge ahead and set out the suggested Next Steps.

Context

Joint Spatial Plan and Joint Transport Study

- 4.1 Whilst this consultation was separate from, but conducted in parallel with, that dealing with the Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) - it was the potential broad locations suggested by the JSP that formed the context for the exhibition and workshop discussions. Each location had been examined in outline terms, and ‘Concept Diagrams’ produced as a starting point and visual aid to stimulate discussion with communities and other stakeholders, as well as to provide participants with a general idea of an approximate ‘footprint’ or ‘land-take’.



Larger versions of the Concept Diagrams can be found at www.southglos.gov.uk/newlocalplan

4.2 A Joint Transport Study (JTS) has been progressed alongside the JSP. One of its aims is to identify the impact of new development on the transport network, and propose the transport investment required to address that impact through a package of strategic transport mitigation to support each strategic development location. It was anticipated that people attending each event would have very strong concerns about how any new strategic transport infrastructure can be delivered. The primary purpose of the events was to focus on local access and movement issues - i.e. where are the local paths and cycle routes that may need improvement and where should new links be provided to encourage more people to walk and cycle? However, where strategic transport issues and concerns were raised these have been appropriately recorded and will be used to help inform these wider initiatives as they move forward - in order to build trust and confidence amongst local communities.