

Buckover Garden Village – FAQs

Introduction

The Council is beginning the process of producing a new Local Plan that will guide planning decisions across South Gloucestershire over the coming years. The South Gloucestershire Local Plan will be informed in part by the final 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 updated draft of the JSP is expected to be published for a final round of public consultation this winter.

Although the JSP is still in draft form, South Gloucestershire Council is keen to begin the process of producing its new Local Plan as good planning requires that local communities are consulted early and kept well informed about how they would like new development to come forward.

This is one of five locations in South Gloucestershire: Charfield, Coalpit Heath, Buckover Garden Village, Thornbury, Yate and Chipping Sodbury, identified as potential suitable and sustainable locations for new strategic development in the current draft JSP.

Events are now planned around those key areas. Details are as follows:

- Charfield – Wednesday 20 September, Charfield Memorial Hall, 2-8pm
- Coalpit Heath – Friday 22 September, Coalpit Heath Village Hall/Miners Institute, 2-8pm
- Thornbury – Friday 29 September, Armstrong Hall, 2-8pm
- Yate and Chipping Sodbury – Wednesday 4 October, Sodbury Town Hall, 2-8pm
- Buckover Garden Village – Friday 6 October at Falfield Village Hall, 2-8pm

What is happening today?

This is a non-statutory public consultation event, i.e. the Council is not required under planning regulations to undertake it. It is an additional opportunity for members of the public to attend and engage with on a without prejudice basis. i.e. you can still object in principle through the forthcoming JSP and new Local Plan consultations. The intention is therefore to record local people's views about what the priorities, character and type of new development should be if decisions are taken in the future to place growth in that area. Feedback from this event will be fed into the first draft new South Gloucestershire Local Plan, which will be published for full consultation across South Gloucestershire in the first half of 2018.

How does this relate to the Expression of Interest bid the Council made in 2016?

In March 2016 the Government launched the 'Locally-led garden villages, towns and cities initiative', inviting expressions of interest (Eoi) for a limited amount of funding and support from government for developing Garden Village proposals. The Council made a submission but in the event was not one of the chosen schemes.

This unsuccessful bid for funding support was entirely separate from the local plan-led process of identifying and evaluating the potential of Buckover Garden Village (and other

locations) to contribute to housing delivery to meet the needs of the Housing Market Area, of which South Gloucestershire is a part.

The statutory plan-making process provides a number of opportunities for comments to be sought, made, and considered, and the Plan will ultimately be assessed by an independent inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.

Why is it important we do this?

The JSP process is not yet complete and final decisions have not been made about where the Strategic Development Locations will be, but we want to start the conversation with communities to say, if there is growth, what do you want it to look like and what infrastructure and community facilities should we make sure are delivered alongside new housing or business premises. We are 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 the locations 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.

So the Council has decided everything then?

No. The JSP will be subject to further public consultation this winter and public inquiry next year, and the new South Gloucestershire Local Plan is still at a very early stage. You can still continue to object in principle if you so wish and contributing to this event today will not impact on that at all. You are free to make full and independent representations within the JSP process and object to the principle of including this location. This event is the beginning of a conversation about the nature of the development should the location be adopted by the JSP. Further information on the new Local Plan can be found at:

www.southglos.gov.uk/newlocalplan

What is the status of the Diagram being presented at the Exhibition?

The very simple draft 'Concept Diagram' is a starting point for this consultation. The aim is to obtain reaction and feedback on the diagram and to understand how the existing qualities (both good and bad) of the Thornbury & Buckover locality might usefully influence new development. Of equal, if not greater, importance is to understand what aspirations local people have for the type of place(s) and communities that will eventually be created. You can still object in principle but are also invited to view the boards and talk to the facilitators about your views, concerns and ideas.

What is a Garden Village?

The idea of a garden settlement is one of the most radical, practical and relevant legacies of British town planning. The concept seeks to provide a blend of the highest standards of design and access to employment, services, green space and the countryside with the profits of rising land values shared for the benefit of the new community.

The Garden City vision was distilled by Ebenezer Howard in the late Victorian period out of a utopian movement and arts and crafts tradition often promoted by industrialists who saw the case for better living conditions for their workers. Such communities included Port

Sunlight and Bournville. Howards ideas thus formed the basis of the Letchworth Garden Village and other pioneering examples such as Welwyn Garden City and some of the new towns such as Harlow.. The concept provided a web of solutions from energy and food production to access to green space and health care, new forms of housing, education and business. What was remarkable is that Howard found a way of funding such places. Simply put: part of the substantial increase in £value that arises from development of land is re-invested into the community for the benefit of all, not only in the initial development phase, but also in perpetuity as land and property continues to be traded and redeveloped in the future. In effect land is held in trust for and £returns governed by the community. This principle still sustains a whole range of services in Letchworth that other communities can no longer afford.

Why Buckover?

A new Garden Village at Buckover would be a key component of an 'arc' of new growth from Oldbury on Severn (new nuclear build) to Thornbury, Charfield and Wotton-under-Edge providing new opportunities to meet housing pressures in the north of the district. Together, these growth points will also assist make the case for a step change in public transport in the locality, by extending Metrobus routes from the major employment centres of North Bristol, providing for additional bus services and supporting the case to reopen Charfield railway station. Investment will also be made in the strategic road network (e.g. M5, J14). Buckover is also outside the Green Belt and the land is relatively unconstrained by issues such as flooding, heritage assets or high landscape value, constraints prevalent to the north and west of Thornbury. More information on the Joint Spatial Plan can be found at: www.jointplanningwofe.org.uk

The land is also 100% owned by the Tortworth Estate, which has a long history of estate management in the area, with forestry, quarrying, farming, local business and community interests. Hence unlike typical developer models where the landowner and developer have little interest in the locality, land is sold to the highest bidder and both quickly move on, the long-term relationship of the estate to the land and wider locality means that the conditions exist to capture much more of the land-value, create the governance structures and recycle profits into the long-term community stewardship of the new settlement. Buckover is being promoted on the basis of creating an exemplar new settlement that follows GV principles. The challenge for the estate, community and Council is to ensure it delivers.

What is to stop the new settlement merging with Thornbury?

The Council agrees that this is a risk. Therefore a critical component of the proposal will be a new strategic 'green gap' between Thornbury's urban edge and the new Garden Village at Buckover. This will be critical to the distinctiveness and integrity of Thornbury and the new settlement. Therefore, the new Local Plan will need to consider an appropriate designation for this land and what positive uses could be encouraged. Thoughts are invited.

How can BGV be a truly standalone sustainable new settlement when it is so close to Thornbury?

No settlements old or new in modern Britain are truly self-sufficient. All exist in a competing and complementary hierarchy of interconnected settlements, reliant on one another for

various services and functions. With careful planning the Garden Village provides a real opportunity to complement, not compete with, the role and function of Thornbury. Careful consideration is thus required to the range and type of new housing, services and facilities, to the location of any new centre and the connections between the two settlements. Thus, comments about what Thornbury does well as well as what it doesn't currently offer are of particular interest.

How do you decide how many new homes are appropriate?

We first consider constraints such as floodzones, the setting of any listed buildings, land with higher landscape and ecological value and any existing trees and hedges etc. We then weigh this with existing and potential infrastructure capacity, local and wider housing needs and the type and density of development that is likely to be appropriate to the locality. In the case of BGV there are few such constraints which was a key determinant in deciding to go ahead with public consultation on the proposal. Currently it is envisaged that about 2,200 homes could be constructed by 2036 out of a total capacity of around 3,000 homes. We are undertaking further technical work and will update this at the next stage of the JSP.

What about the schools?

The Local Education Authority (LEA) has indicated that the new settlement should provide 2-3 new primary schools. Existing growth in the area is likely to absorb spare capacity in local secondary schools. Any further development will therefore need to make a contribution towards additional secondary school places in the locality, possibly that could form part of a strategic need for places across new JSP locations at Thornbury, Charfield and Buckover Garden Village. This could be in the form of a new 3-16 through school at BGV.

What about the doctors?

The Council has consulted the NHS Trust and South Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group. They are consulting the local practices and we are awaiting their further considerations.

What about the traffic?

A WoE Joint Transport Study was also consulted on in November 2016. Further information can also be found at: www.jointplanningwofe.org.uk. A package of strategic transport mitigation have been identified to support any new growth. We understand people have very strong concerns about how any new strategic transport infrastructure can be delivered. However, today, we would like people to focus on local access issues, i.e. where are the local paths and cycle routes that may need improvement and where should new links be provided? Where new facilities would be best placed to encourage more people to walk and cycle? How should the A38 through the new settlement be treated?

Why are consultants being used?

In addition to the particular skills, knowledge and experience that their team can offer, Design Action are providing an independent 'critical friend' role and from this position of neutrality will be more able to lead/chair the discussions + explore and speculate creatively with the attendees. Indeed they may question some of the detail of the Concept Diagrams in their current form. Afterwards, Design Action will compile the evidence and summarise the feedback from each of the events, making independent recommendations for what are

the key messages and themes that have emerged. These reports should then be used by the Council in formulating the briefs for the more technical master-planning and drafting of more detailed policy that will follow within the Local Plan process. The independence of Design Action should help to further convince participants that the engagement process is a genuine one.

What happens next?

Feedback from this exhibition will help the council and local community to plan for the new settlement at Buckover. The events will be 'written up' and the evidence and summary conclusions from the consultation will feed into the new South Gloucestershire Local Plan when it begins to emerge during 2018. There will also be other opportunities to shape that through further consultation events and we will let you know further details about these as we go into next year. It is expected that a masterplan will evolve for each location and some specific policies to manage the development within it set out in the JSP and new South Gloucestershire Local Plan. Comments can also be made after the event until Friday 13th Oct 17 via: PlanningPolicy@southglos.gov.uk .