

Thornbury – 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.

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 Thornbury might usefully influence new development. Of equal, if not greater, importance is to understand what aspirations local people have for the type of place and community 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.

Why Thornbury?

Additional development at Thornbury would be part of the potential 'arc' of new growth from Oldbury on Severn (new nuclear build) to Buckover Garden Village, 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 potentially supporting the case to reopen Charfield railway station. Investment will also be made in the strategic road network (e.g. M5, J14).

The additional development, subject to this being appropriately planned, would provide for some continued natural growth, consolidate existing expansion, continue to support the vitality of the town centre and strengthen local services. It also provides additional investment and employment opportunities. A new strategic 'green' gap between Thornbury's urban edge and the new Garden Village at Buckover will be critical to the distinctiveness and integrity of the town.

More information on the Joint Spatial Plan can be found at: www.jointplanningwofe.org.uk

What about the Buckover Garden Village proposal?

The main focus of today's event is on the Thornbury sites, but seen in the context of the potential Buckover GV proposal. That's why we also have information about the Buckover Concept Diagram on display as conversations will naturally include both and the 'gap' in between. We are therefore happy to discuss Buckover Garden Village and its impacts,

although a second full event focussing solely on the Buckover GV concept and how it may be planned is happening next week at Falfield Village Hall on 6th Oct, 2-8pm.

Today, we would like to hear from residents primarily in respect of Thornbury relating to:

- ***The impact of new housing in Thornbury.***
- ***What is needed to support new housing.***
- ***The appropriateness of new employment development at Crossways.***
- ***What should take place between Thornbury and the proposed garden village at Buckover.***
- ***What type of housing, services and facilities located in the new garden village would complement those available in Thornbury and,***
- ***the relationship between the two.***

Please note a separate event has been scheduled to discuss **Buckover Garden Village** in detail on **Friday 6 October at Falfield Village Hall, 2-8pm.**

How and why is development currently coming forward in Thornbury?

In the case of Thornbury, the Core Strategy focussed growth to the north and north east of the Town, so as to reduce the impact on the setting of the town centre conservation area and grade I listed castle and landscape of higher value, and flood zone to the west of the town. In so doing, this decision indicated the potential direction for any further expansion of Thornbury to the east through any subsequent review of the Core Strategy.

Notwithstanding this, due to the Council not being able to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, the release of additional land north and east of Morton Way has been advanced by the development sector through a number of speculative planning applications.

Why were these speculative applications made?

The Government requires councils to allocate housing land and set a housing target over its plan period (for our current Core Strategy the housing requirement is 28,355 new homes from 2016 to 2027). This is then annualised over 5yr periods (which taking account of lower delivery rates is currently about 2000 per annum). If housebuilding falls below this rate then developers can use this fact as a reason to submit speculative applications. As many people will be aware, some of the large sites in the Local Plan at Filton Airfield, Harry Stoke and North Yate have not come forward as quickly as envisaged, therefore the Council has recently been unable to maintain a 5yr land supply position. Thornbury is also not wholly in the Greenbelt therefore it is more susceptible to such speculative planning applications. Thornbury is not unique. This is a common problem nationally and locally. Other places in South Gloucestershire have received such speculative applications recently, including Charfield, Wickwar and Falfield.

As it stands the current situation in Thornbury is:

Sites allocated through the South Gloucestershire Core Strategy:

- Park Farm development (Barratts) was approved in March 2013 for up to 500 dwellings. This site is now under construction with 84 completed by April 2017. (planning ref PT11/1442/O, PT13/0919/RM, PT15/5528/RM)
- Land at Morton Way (Bloor Homes) was approved by appeal in May 2013 for up to 300 dwellings. This site is now under construction with 144 completed by April 2017. (planning ref PT12/2395/O, PT14/2398/RVC, PT15/5060/RM)

Speculative planning applications approved:

- Land at Post Farm was approved in May 2016 for 125 dwellings. Site start is expected Sept/Oct 2017 (planning ref PT15/2917/O, PT16/4055/RM)
- Land west of Gloucester Road for 130 dwellings was approved in August 2017. (planning ref PT16/4774/O)

Speculative planning applications currently subject to appeal:

- Land at Cleeve Park for up to 350 dwellings was refused by Councillors in March 2017 on the grounds that the development is speculative in nature and would not result in comprehensively planned development; and the 3-storey buildings would be out of keeping with the historic market town. The application has now been appealed. A public inquiry is likely to take place in the spring next year. A date hasn't been set yet. Application details can be found on the Council's web site – search planning applications (ref PT16/3565/O).

Speculative planning applications awaiting a decision:

- An application for 370 dwellings was made by Bovis Homes for land South of Gloucester Road. Determination is expected by December 2017. (ref PT17/2006/O). Officers have raised strong concerns to the Bovis application on a number of grounds, including the speculative, piecemeal nature of the application. Amended plans are expected from the applicant shortly, which will be subject to a further round of public consultation before a decision is made later this year.

What sites should count against Thornbury's current JSP growth figure

In the case of the Post Farm approval this fell on the cusp of the start of the JSP period. Given it was approved by our Planning Committee to address the 5 year housing land supply issue and was previously identified in our April 2016 Residential Land Availability Schedule our approach has been to consider it as part of meeting the Core Strategy build out residential total figure which currently stands (at April 2017) at 17,489 dwellings between April 17 and April 2027.

Planning applications on greenfield sites approved *after* Post Farm would potentially count towards meeting the JSP growth figures for Thornbury. Likewise should any of the planning applications not yet determined subsequently be approved we would assume these would also in effect count towards the JSP growth allocation for Thornbury.

It should also be noted that if development continues to come forward through 'planning by appeal' then there is a current risk that growth at Thornbury could exceed the current JSP target. The Council feels strongly this is not the way things should be done and this potential threat further supports why we are holding our Events/Exhibitions now - and getting the Local Plan process underway.

It must also be understood that the JSP 'growth targets' at this time have little status in planning terms and so would not provide any 'stop' to future speculative greenfield developments given the stage the Plan has reached. The JSP cannot be used to set a moratorium against which no further homes will be allowed to be developed in Thornbury.

Accordingly, speculative applications beyond the current settlement boundary for Thornbury may continue to be presented to South Gloucestershire Council based on the lack of a deliverable 5 year housing land supply. In which case any officer recommendation to approve or refuse would be based on the NPPF paragraph 14 test i.e. the planning balance and not on whether the JSP growth target had been met or not met.

Any sites that come forward for development within the settlement boundary of Thornbury are consistent with our adopted Core Strategy. It is therefore appropriate for these sites e.g. the redevelopment of the former Council offices at Castle Street, to continue to count towards meeting the outstanding Core Strategy housing requirement figure. That's why we are counting such sites against build out of the Core Strategy.

In reality whether it is greenfield sites or brownfield sites coming forward for development both sources of land supply, subject to planning approval being granted, will count towards meeting the 5 year housing land supply which until replaced continues to be based on the current Core Strategy.

What about the need for further employment development in Thornbury?

Feedback from earlier public consultation made it very clear that many people felt further employment provision was needed in Thornbury. We have listened to this and the Concept Diagram shows some employment land at Crossways to help rebalance housing growth with new local job opportunities. We would welcome your thoughts on this at the Exhibition today.

What about the schools?

In the short to medium term the Local Authority (LA) has indicated that existing surplus places across primary schools in Thornbury are likely to be absorbed by children generated by current new housing development. However, the scale of consented development in Thornbury means that in the longer term, the number of primary and secondary school age children likely to require a place will be in excess of the capacity of existing Thornbury schools and options and funding to expand existing primary and secondary schools on current sites are limited. Any further development will therefore need to make a contribution towards additional primary and secondary school places and depending on distances and location of new development this could possibly form part of a strategic need for places across the new JSP site at Buckover Garden Village.

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 does a Neighbourhood Plan fit in to all of this?

Local communities can bring forward a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) as a statutory development plan document. Thornbury has commenced work on its NP. NPs should also generally be in accordance with the district wide Local Plan and should not be used as a tool to stop and block new development. NPs should also be evidence based and subject to a public examination and local referendum. The Council is committed to working with the Thornbury NP Group. We want to ensure as far as possible that the work we are now undertaking through these exhibitions and further place making work we want to do next year, will compliment and work alongside progress on the Thornbury NP.

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.

What happens next?

Feedback from this exhibition will help the council and local community to plan for the impact of further new development in Thornbury. 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 October 2017 via: PlanningPolicy@southglos.gov.uk .