Charfield - 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 Charfield 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 Charfield?
Plan led growth at Charfield could be a key component of an ‘arc’ of new growth from Oldbury on Severn (new nuclear build) to Thornbury, Buckover Garden Village and Wotton-under-Edge providing new opportunities to meet housing pressures in the north of the district. Together, growth at these locations could 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 need to be made in the strategic road network (M5, J14). Charfield is also outside the Green Belt. More information on the Joint Spatial Plan can be found at: www.jointplanningwofe.org.uk

How do you decide how many new homes are appropriate?
We first consider constraints such as the Little Avon along Charfield’s eastern edge, land with high landscape value such as the escarpment to its west up to Churchend, the setting of heritage assets such as the Grade I listed church at Churchend, ecological assets such as Tortworth Copse and flood zones 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.

Do the Crest Nicholson & Bellway sites count towards the requirement?
No. The JSP requirement will be over and above the dwellings completed on these sites.

Why did the Council refuse permission for the Barratt application on land at Warners Court?
The Council considers that this site, being the last ‘greenfield’ in the centre of the village is potentially very important, as it could provide a range of alternative uses that would contribute more to the long-term sustainability and vitality of the village than another standard housing scheme. The Council therefore wishes to have the time to consider with the local community what these other uses could be, through a plan led process. The Council also considered that the scheme was deficient in other ways, such as ecology and design. The developer has now appealed the application. 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 PT16/6924/O).

**Why were these 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. Charfield is also not in the Greenbelt therefore it is more susceptible to such speculative planning applications. Charfield is not unique. This is a common problem nationally and locally. Other places in South Gloucestershire have received such speculative applications recently, including Thornbury, Wickwar and Falfield.

**What about the schools?**
The local primary school is an academy school. The developments by Crest Nicholson & Bellway are likely to take up the remaining capacity. The Local education Authority (LEA) is therefore in discussion with the school about how best to provide further capacity. The LEA and Academy have indicated that a single new larger school would be preferable, as opposed to 2 smaller primaries within the village. A central location would also be preferable. Existing planned developments are also likely to absorb spare capacity in local secondary schools. Any further development will therefore need to make a contribution towards additional secondary school places. The LEA has indicated that this could form part of a new strategic need in combination with proposed growth at Thornbury and Buckover Garden Village. These are further reasons why we think working together is a better way to plan for any new growth.

**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](http://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?

**What about the Charfield Parish Plan?**
The Charfield Parish Plan is a very useful resource and source of evidence about local views and opinions. It however, carries very limited weight in the plan making process but we want to ensure we make the best possible use of it.

**What is a Neighbourhood Plan?**
Local communities can bring forward a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) as a statutory development plan document. Charfield has commenced work on its NP. NPs should also generally be in accordance with the strategic policies of 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 local referendum and public inquiry. The Council is committed to working with the Charfield 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 progressing the Charfield 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. 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 set out why we think there is a better approach to plan for any new development that may be needed in Charfield. A good, strong Local Plan, based on sound evidence and local community input, means we are much better placed to demand that developers deliver what we want and need. 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 **Wed 27th Sept 17** via: PlanningPolicy@southglos.gov.uk.