

## **Coalpit Heath – 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](http://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 Coalpit Heath 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 Coalpit Heath?**

The Bristol North Fringe employment areas, Science Park and Enterprise area at Emersons Green continue to grow robustly. Coalpit Heath's close proximity to these areas provides a critical opportunity to support this employment expansion with a new mixed-use neighbourhood. Strategic development east of the A432 Badminton Road in combination with further growth at Yate / Chipping Sodbury would support investment into rail at Yate and a Metrobus extension, including new strategic foot and cycle infrastructure. It would also support existing and provide some new services, facilities and employment opportunities. More information on the Joint Spatial Plan can be found at:

[www.jointplanningwofe.org.uk](http://www.jointplanningwofe.org.uk)

### **How do you decide how many new homes are appropriate?**

We first consider constraints such as the former mine workings, the setting of any listed buildings such as the Mayhill & Rose Oak Farmhouses, any known interests of archaeological importance such as the historic dramway, land with higher landscape value such as the ridgeline running north-south through the search area 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.

**What about the former Coal mining?**

Residents will be aware that the locality was subject to extensive historic coal mining activity, hence the name 'Coalpit Heath'. Some residents may also have seen some investigative survey work being undertaken across the fields to the east of Coalpit Heath in recent months. These preliminary geotechnical and contamination investigations are initially being carried out by the landowners and their developer partners at the request of the Council. Full reports have yet to be received and scrutinised by the Council.

Early feedback from these landowner studies are that the western edge of the site is at risk from historical shallow coal mining and associated mine entries and to a lesser extent deeper underground workings. Some of the mine entries have been secured whilst some have not. Historic bell pits also appear to be present in the west of the westernmost fields.

Given these findings and potential for further unidentified workings, it has been advised that further more detailed investigations are undertaken, including stripping topsoil from the some of the western most fields and additional boreholes across the site. However, the early feedback is that the risk in respect of the western fields is not as extensive as first envisaged. Accordingly, further investigations will refine the remedial measures that will be required. These are not considered out of the ordinary and it is often good practice to incorporate the recorded mine entries into the public open space element of any scheme. The mine workings also deepen to the east and as such the risk of coal mining subsidence in the east of the site is considered relatively low.

**What about the schools?**

The Local Education Authority (LEA) has stated that there are few surplus places across existing primary schools in the Coalpit Heath area. They have indicated that one or possibly two new schools will be required within the development area to serve the new residents. Existing natural growth in the area 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 in the locality.

**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?

**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 new development that may be needed in Coalpit Heath. 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 Friday 29<sup>th</sup> Sept 17 via: [PlanningPolicy@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:PlanningPolicy@southglos.gov.uk).