KNIGHT, KAVANAGH & PAGE

# CHELTENHAM & TEWKESBURY

# SOCIAL, SPORT AND OPEN SPACES STRATEGY

# JANUARY 2017

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

# CHELTENHAM & TEWKESBURY
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## PART 1: INTRODUCTION

This is the overarching Social, Sport and Open Spaces Strategy which brings together a suite of separate needs assessments and strategies setting out recommendations and where relevant local standards for the provision of facilities and infrastructure including green space, indoor sport and recreation facilities, and community facilities across Cheltenham and Tewkesbury. The suite of documents includes:

‹ Cheltenham & Tewkesbury Open Space Assessment Report
‹ Cheltenham Open Space Standards Paper
‹ Tewkesbury Open Space Standards Paper
‹ Cheltenham & Tewkesbury Playing Pitch Assessment Report
‹ Cheltenham Playing Pitch Strategy
‹ Tewkesbury Playing Pitch Strategy
‹ Cheltenham & Tewkesbury Built Leisure and Sports Assessment Report
‹ Cheltenham Built Leisure and Sports Strategy
‹ Tewkesbury Built Leisure and Sports Strategy
‹ Cheltenham & Tewksbury: social sustainability across four sites.

Further to this, the Study also incorporates an assessment of social and cultural infrastructure to ensure that infrastructure and services around the identified urban extensions are planned to best meet the social needs of the existing and new communities; and to make practical recommendations for boosting social sustainability and community life.

The Study has been prepared in accordance with national, regional and local planning context, including guidance produced by Sport England. In particular, the study complies with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and Sport England Guidance on Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance 2014 and Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance 2013. The Study also refers to 'Design for Social Sustainability' (Social Life 2012).

### Outcomes

This strategy sets out recommendations to address areas of deficiency, including opportunities for the enhancement of existing land and recommendations to address an over-provision of land in some areas of each borough, including options for a more effective use of land and review of opportunities. Outputs recognise that communities and development sites need flexibility and a 'one size fits all' approach is not appropriate.

This overarching Strategy is provided to:

‹ Guide future applicants in identifying and addressing both gaps in provision and community strengths that could be developed.
‹ Provide adequate planning guidance to assess development proposals affecting social, sport and open spaces as appropriate, directing contributions secured through development and informing and shaping local planning policy.
‹ Inform the protection and provision of social, sport and open spaces facilities and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and S106 and CIL schedules.
‹ Inform land use decisions in respect of future use of existing social, sport and open spaces across the area;
‹ Provide a strategic framework for the provision and management of social, sport and open spaces across the area;
‹ Support external funding bids and maximise support for social, sport and open spaces provision.

Further to this, the study provides a comprehensive assessment and a statement, (with evidence base) of the standards of infrastructure required to enable it to be a place that:

◂ Takes account of how existing communities and its facilities will be affected by new development and what additional pressure will be placed on existing assets
◂ Encourages quality of life for its residents
◂ Generates community integration, engagement and spirit
◂ Encourages healthy, active lifestyles
◂ Encourages the development of strong, inclusive communities
◂ Improves social cohesion
◂ Prevents anti-social behaviour and crime
◂ Meets relevant council policies.
◂ Is accessible and inclusive of people living with a disability or limiting long term illness

### 1.1 Context

The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) is a partnership between Gloucester City Council, Cheltenham Borough Council, and Tewkesbury Borough Council, supported by Gloucestershire County Council. The JCS was formed to produce a co-ordinated strategic development plan to show how this area will develop during the period up to 2031. This plan is currently subject to an examination.

Both councils are reviewing their respective development plans and the study will form an integral part of the evidence base needed to support the review of policies and preparation of the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury borough wide local plans, assisting delivery of the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (JCS). The study will have a key role in planning for the provision of open space, sports and recreation and community facilities across both boroughs.

### 1.2 Scope

***Open spaces:***

Allotments, amenity green space (including local green space as identified in NPPF:76), cemeteries and churchyards, civic space, green corridors, natural and semi natural green space, parks and gardens, provision for children and young children.

***Playing pitches and outdoor sports:***

Football, cricket, rugby and artificial grass pitches and other outdoor sports facilities including
bowling greens, tennis and netball courts, athletics tracks and golf courses.

***Built leisure and sports:***

Sports halls, leisure facilities, swimming pools and gyms. Community centres, youth centres, village halls and other community spaces.

***Social and cultural infrastructure:***

Community groups, neighbourhood networks, community arts organisations, community sports groups, care and support networks, community websites, local festivals.

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## 1.3 Study area

Tewkesbury borough is the northernmost district in the south-west region. The population is approximately 81,700 made up of 36,834 households spread across 160 square miles. The area is predominantly rural in nature with over 50% of residents living in rural settlements and large market towns. Key settlements in addition to the main town of Tewkesbury include Ashchurch, Bishop's Cleeve, Churchdown and Winchcombe. Reflecting its predominately rural nature, there are 50 town/parishes.

In terms of deprivation nationally, Tewkesbury is ranked 275 out of 326 councils (1 being most deprived) this puts us in the top 20% of areas with low deprivation. Within the Borough there are small pockets of deprivation within general areas of prosperity.

Cheltenham, also known as Cheltenham Spa, is a large spa town and borough in Gloucestershire, located on the edge of the Cotswolds. Its population is 115,300, ranked 186th out of 326 English districts based on population. It has the most complete 19th Century town plan in England and with its historic parks, squares and tree lined avenues makes the Borough unique and has given the title of 'a town within a park'.

The districts of Cheltenham include: Arle, Benhall, Charlton Kings, Cleevemount, Fairview, Fiddler's Green, Hesters Way, Lansdown Leckhampton, Lynworth, Montpellier, Oakley, Pittville, Prestbury, the Reddings, Rowanfield, St Luke's, St Mark's, St Paul's, St Peter's, Springbank, Springfields, Swindon Village, Tivoli, Up Hatherley, Whaddon and Wyman's Brook. The Borough has a great diversity of communities with well-established neighbourhood-based communities including five parish councils.

There are significant pockets of deprivation in Cheltenham with 19.6% of the population falling within the most deprived 30% nationally. Conversely, however, 43.6% are within the two least deprived groups (nationally this is 20%).

*Figure 1.1: Map of the study area*
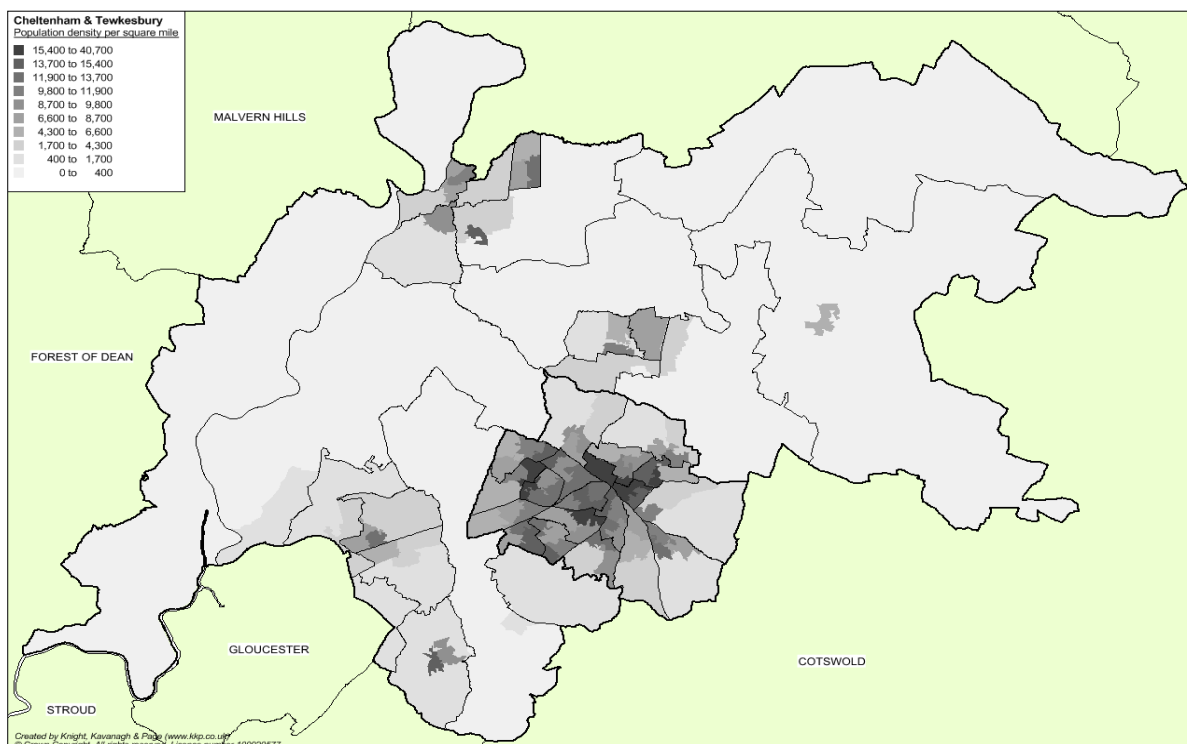
**PART 2: OPEN SPACE OUTCOMES**

The evidence presented in the Open Space Assessment Report and Standards Paper should be used to inform local plan and supplementary planning documents. It helps identify the deficiencies and surpluses in existing and future provision. In addition, it should help set an approach to securing open space facilities through new housing development and help form the basis for negotiation with developers for contributions towards the provision of appropriate open space facilities and their long-term maintenance.

‹   The majority of open spaces rate above the thresholds set for quality. Most noticeably, more allotments and churchyards score above the thresholds for quality. However, the fact that all typologies have a high number of sites scoring high for quality reflects the generally good standard of provision.

‹   Similarly, the majority of all open spaces are assessed as being above the threshold for value. This reflects the importance of open space provision and its role in offering social, environmental and health benefits to communities and users.

‹   No significant gaps in provision are identified from the catchment mapping. However, there are a number of examples across both local authorities where sites of one typology help to serve the need for other typologies.

The following overarching recommendations are set out and discussed in further detail within the Standards Paper:

‹   Utilise quantity standards to determine open space requirements for strategic allocations
‹   Standards set for quantity, quality and accessibility should be utilised in conjunction in order to determine future requirements
‹   Sites helping to serve areas identified as having gaps in catchment mapping should be recognised through protection and enhancement
‹   Ensure low quality sites are explored for enhancement
‹   Recognise low quality and value sites and how they may be able to meet other instances of need
‹   The need for additional cemetery provision should be led by demand

Application of the quantity standards are set out within the Standards Paper to help inform the land use decisions, development proposals and contributions of future provision. The quantity standards can be used and applied to determine future open space requirements as a result of new housing growth.

‹   No quantity standard is set for cemetery, civic space or green corridor provision. For burial space, provision should be determined by demand and remaining burial capacity. Green corridors and civic spaces are to some extent infrastructure provision; their existence is determined by other factors such as landscape design, travel networks and economic influences.

‹   In development areas where open space provision is identified as being sufficient in terms of quantity and accessibility, it may be more suitable to seek contributions for quality improvements to existing sites.

‹   Small sized onsite contributions should be avoided on developments where possible. It is recognised that open spaces of a particular small size hold less recreational use and value. The presence of additional sites will also add to the existing pressures on maintenance regimes and safety inspections. It is therefore recommended that a minimum threshold is used to help determine whether provision should be provided on or off site.

**PART 3: PLAYING PITCH OUTCOMES**

The Playing Pitch Strategies for Cheltenham and Tewkesbury provide a strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing outdoor sports pitches and ancillary facilities between 2016 and 2037. The following headline recommendations are provided to address the key issues and outcomes of the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Playing Pitch Assessment Report.

**Recommendations**

‹ Protect the existing provision of grass playing pitches to service current demand (unless, a new 3G pitch can be provided within the same locality to counteract the reduction in quantity of grass pitches given existing shortfalls, ensuring that new provision remains accessible to these residents and clubs).

‹ Where pitches are overplayed and rated as standard or poor quality, prioritise investment and review maintenance regimes to ensure it is of an appropriate standard to sustain/improve pitch quality.

‹ Consider potential for asset transfer to clubs which are realistically able to sustain and maintain sporting provision as required.

‹ Work to secure tenure for clubs which require long term security to help establish and improve, for example, Cheltenham Town FC.

‹ Consider strategic options for future development of full sized 3G pitches, including as part of new school and housing developments and at the Prince of Wales Stadium.

‹ Ensure that any new full sized 3G pitches built are to the required specifications and encourage providers to undergo testing and certification for competitive football.

‹ Consider opportunities to develop World Rugby compliant 3G provision and to utilise for training and matches.

‹ Gloucestershire FA should work in partnership with England Hockey to determine the feasibility of converting sand based AGPs that are surplus to requirements for hockey, in order to increase 3G pitch provision whilst maintaining a balance of surface types to continue to sufficiently accommodate hockey demand.

‹ Explore opportunities for relocation of Old Patesians RFC (Cheltenham) or creation of additional pitches to accommodate unmet demand and teams currently playing at sites without security of tenure.

‹ Consider development of new cricket provision or as part of new housing development in Tewkesbury Area 2 or investment into cricket provision to accommodate demand from both new residents and that reported by clubs.

‹ As required improve quality of changing and ancillary provision to ensure the sustainability of sites and clubs.

‹ Develop a rugby league focus site within Cheltenham, considering the Prince of Wales Stadium as a key dual code rugby facility able to accommodate community and performance use.

‹ Increase AGP provision in Tewkesbury by one pitch to accommodate current, displaced and future demand.

‹ Work with schools to increase community access to grass pitches and artificial surfaces.

‹ Investigate opportunities to access a second green for Cheltenham Bowling Club, Bishops Cleeve Bowls Club and Tewkesbury Bowls Club in order to alleviate the current level of overplay at the main club site.

‹ Maximise use of public tennis courts through delivery of LTA initiatives and encouraging providers to make use of technology solutions.

**PART 4: BUILT LEISURE AND SPORTS OUTCOMES**

The combined vision for indoor and built sports facilities in both Cheltenham and Tewkesbury is as follows:

*To create a network of high quality, accessible and sustainable sport and leisure facilities, which offer inclusive services for all; enabling the inactive to become active and more residents to fulfil their potential by participating in sport and physical activity, thus improving their long-term health and well-being.*

The combined strategic recommendations for both authorities are detailed below. They provide strategic direction for the councils, their partners and stakeholders which provide facilities and opportunities for residents to pursue sport and recreation as a means to engage in physical activity.

◄ To develop a fit for purpose network of better quality leisure and sports facilities in strategic locations in order to meet the sport and physical activity needs of existing communities and new residents.

   This is the overarching objective in relation to the built sport and leisure infrastructure to serve the area. It can only be delivered by focusing on the following components which will focus on addressing a range of complex issues to enable a fit for purpose network of facilities to be delivered.

   ◄ The planned refurbishment of Leisure@Cheltenham and the Prince of Wales Stadium to bring them up to modern day standards and improve their financial viability.

      The key focus for Cheltenham is to ensure that the redevelopment of Leisure@Cheltenham and the Prince of Wales Stadium is in line with the needs identified within the PPS and facilities strategy and that it accords with the wider objectives of Cheltenham Borough Council. That said, there is also a need to ensure the facility expands its income generation potential, links better to its local environment and maximises opportunities for co-location where appropriate.

   ◄ Develop a close working relationship with strategic partners at Gloucester City Council (and the County Council) to assess the sport and leisure needs for new residents in the City's urban extensions (i.e. Innsworth, South Churchdown and North Borockworth)

      It is clear that there is a need for Tewkesbury Borough Council to develop closer links with Gloucester City Council given that three of the proposed development areas within the Borough are Gloucester urban extensions and combined, will generate 3,900 new dwellings. Therefore, there will be a need to determine the infrastructure requirements for these new areas and ensure that where possible good practice guidelines are adhered to. This is of particular relevance if the new housing creates a need for additional education provision.

◁ The potential sports facility development opportunities through new school stock required in the North West Cheltenham development.

As part of the North West Cheltenham urban extension there will be a requirement to develop at least one new secondary school. This presents an opportunity to provide additional community sport and physical activity provision, as well as wider community provision on the same site (e.g. library, health centre, retail, etc).

The key findings from the assessment report (for the combined area) identified the need for an additional 6 badminton court sports hall to serve the needs of residents to 2025 and then an additional 4 courts thereafter. Therefore, the new sports hall provision in North West Cheltenham should be a 6 court sports hall and should have secured community use.

The indoor sports facilities should also align with the outdoor sport requirements and there will be a need to cluster facilities in such a way that their financial sustainability and community use are maximised. As such, there will be a need to consider the size and scale of fitness provision as well as the clustering and location of sports facilities on the school site. Ideally these should reflect the good practice identified earlier within this strategy document.

◁ The opportunities to engage with other services and where possible create multi-agency hubs through the co-location of services.

A key principles of Active Design is the potential to co-locate sports facilities alongside other community facilities such as schools, libraries, health centres, etc. This is also a key driver for the current Sport England Strategy: Towards and Active Nation which advocates co-location with other services as this is where the greatest impact on participation levels has been achieved.

There will be a need for both councils and their partners (e.g. Places for People, the Cheltenham Trust, North West Cheltenham developer, and other urban extension developers, etc.) to consider how existing and new facilities should be designed and/or redeveloped to ensure that residents have the opportunity to be physically active while accessing other services. This not only makes it easier for residents to access services, but it also provides a platform for stakeholders to develop joint interventions for specific priority groups.

The concept of multi-agency hubs and the co-location of services should be a consideration in the development of new housing growth areas as well as in the redevelopment and refurbishment options for existing facilities.

◁ The use of planning gain to develop new and contribute to the improvement of existing facilities in order that they serve the needs of new residents to Cheltenham and Tewkesbury.

It is important that both councils' Planning Departments develops robust planning policies that set out an approach to securing sport and recreational facilities for the longer term, where appropriate via new developments in the area. This should form the basis for negotiation with developers to secure contributions to develop new provision and/or the enhancement of existing indoor facilities.

Section 106 contributions or CIL (the Community Infrastructure Levy) should be used to improve the quality and scope of existing indoor facilities to enable increased capacity and use to be accommodated, enhancing the operator's ability to increase participation at relevant centres. Consideration should also be given to applying such funds to improve the quality of school sports facilities, where they enhance and extend the community use of schools.

Both authorities need to protect the existing supply of sports facilities to meet current or future needs. Local plan policies should protect facilities to safeguard their long term use for the community; this should encompass strategically significant facilities as well as access to school sports facilities.

In relation to its new housing developments, increased demand will be generated from identified urban extensions at Innsworth, South Churchdown, North Borockworth, MOD Ashchurch and North West Cheltenham.

◄ To work with schools to ensure that community use of schools can be secured for the longer term.

A key finding from the assessment report is that both authorities rely on the education sector for part of its community sport and leisure provision and that in Cheltenham this is significantly the independent schools sector.

Given that local residents are reliant on the goodwill of schools for much of its community accessible sports provision, this provision is more susceptible to the school withdrawing community access as a result of changes in its governance arrangements (e.g. new head teacher, new governors) or as a result of misuse of the facilities or equipment (e.g. damage or vandalism).

Therefore, there is a need for both councils to work with both state and independent schools in the area to ensure that community use of facilities can be secured. Ideally schools will sign up to a community use agreement which secures community access for the longer term.

It is also recognised that some school sports facilities are in need of investment. Therefore, the opportunity exists to link the potential use of planning gain to improve the quality of school sports facilities for the community alongside schools committing to the longer term community use of their facilities.

◄ To consider how community and faith facilities should be developed in line with new housing developments across the Borough.

Community and faith facilities tend to serve a relatively localised catchment. It does not appear that there is sufficient provision within or adjacent to proposed housing developments to serve them. Therefore, both councils and housing developers will need to develop a clear approach to providing access to appropriate faith and community facilities within new housing developments. In some instances these types of facilities are often co-located and inextricably linked, providing a range of services and programmes for the local community.

**PART 5: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE OUTCOMES**

The social and cultural outcomes of the study have been undertaken as part of the consultation and engagement processes carried out across all elements of the work. The consultation process identified a range of issues, benefits and challenges applicable to a wide range of topics. These are summarised below.

*Challenges faced by communities in local areas*

One of the more prominent causes for concern reported surrounds community cohesion and new development. Parish councils and voluntary groups report that the scale of development and the increased volumes of use generated are having a considerable impact upon existing local infrastructure notably community facilities, road networks and health services.

This is particularly the case in smaller rural communities which are expanding rapidly and there is a widespread feeling that such locations are losing their 'village' identity. Associated with this is the fact that existing town/village areas can struggle to integrate well with the new areas (and vice versa). This creates actual and perceived barriers and creates tensions in respect of the fact that people resident in different 'generations' of neighbourhoods evolve to become separate units that are not physically or socially enabled and encouraged to intertwine; notwithstanding the fact that from a planning and geographic perspective, they are classed as a single area. This, again, is reportedly reducing overall levels of community cohesion and limiting the 'sense of place' owned by pre-existing and acquired by incoming residents. This is context specific: in some parts of the Cheltenham and Tewskbury the priority will be that new housing developments gain their own distinctive identities alongside villages and towns, in other areas it will be more important to merge identities of new developments with adjacent neighbourhoods.

Some groups consulted suggested a greater number of more structured and focused community events and projects in accessible places are needed. One example cited was that of the development of community hubs within well used open space sites (parks) and community allotments.

Another reported factor in this debate relates to the views held by pre-existing communities in respect of the purposes for which prior neighbourhood open and/or green spaces are developed. This, perhaps inevitably, has a knock-on impact upon pre-existing resident perceptions of the communities that then occupy these neighbourhoods – who by and large have little or no perception or understanding of the prior function of the space they now live in/on.

This is exacerbated by the fact that it is consistently reported that a major factor in the process of improving existing or developing new open space sites as a consequence of the loss of other areas are the inevitable substantive variations of local opinion with regard to what they become, be used for and the orientation to particular usage types/user groups. It is clearly very difficult in such processes to make everyone happy.

However, what is clear is that it is important to retain (or develop) a balance of facilities that are of interest to (and will service the recreational and social needs of) older generations as well as younger people and families. Consultation would suggest that it tends to be older people (because of the length of time they have inhabited a specific town/village/area and possibly because replacing the characteristics of specific types of open space is a less tangible process than the installation of play areas or pitches) who are least comfortable with the alternatives offered and provided.

A further issue reportedly faced by communities consulted is a lack of public transport. This is particularly the case for rural towns and villages. While this is something of a universal truth and is a reoccurring theme, although few if any tangible evidence has been collected in respect of the specifics of such statements.

Also relating to transport networks, consultation did highlight a need for pathways and cycle routes to be better considered. Some existing and installed routes are reported to 'not link up'; this clearly limits their value beyond the purely recreational as they do not enable people to walk/cycle between areas. Therefore, clear consideration needs to be given to the principles of 'active design' for which there is much guidance. These also have the secondary benefit of re-connecting areas of town to the countryside when they become separated from the countryside by new development.

A limited focus on the reasons for this is also significant: going to a newsagent or shop, visiting a park, routes to schools (in particular primary/junior schools) are all relevant criteria. Further to this consideration of where key barriers such as main roads are located is vital as, from both a practical and perceptual perspective, they are often a major obstruction to the development of physical and social linkages between communities.

A number of people consulted report that facilities owned by schools have become more difficult to access as a result of factors such as school demand and child protection policy/ practice. In some areas this has contributed to a perceived shortage of accessible facilities for community social and recreational activity.

Observations made in this regard related to working with schools (sometimes the only main non-residential venue in a community) to find ways to enable certain parts of their facilities to be made available all day (or at least on a wider range of occasions during the day) to allow people from various social (and age) groups to make use of them. It was also noted that existing local venues could, with some changes, be adapted to enable them to host a wider variety of activities.

Many youth centres and parish councils report that they are finding it difficult to maintain and resource their facilities due to a lack of funding and other forms of support. Modernisation and the availability of revenue funding would, for example, reportedly assist and alleviate the strain of daily operation at both Brizen Youth Centre and Leckhampton Village Hall. There is a need for new sustainable business models for community facilities, and support is often needed to help volunteers understand how to make the transition from grant dependency to income generation.

*Community facilities or services that people would like to see more of in their areas*

Parish councils and other groups consulted suggest that more community facilities are needed. The general consensus is, however, that single function venues are (or should be) a thing of the past. New facilities developed and, as applicable investment in existing locations should be geared to ensuring optimal levels of 'dual use'. Community venues need to be designed to (and managed so as to enable them to) function as meeting places as well as places for events and activities to take place including sport (which is often one of the means via which income is generated thus contributing to sustainability).

Existing and new buildings need to be able to encourage a large range of groups to use them. In essence, what consultees are saying is that pursuit of some form of community activity based business model which enables provision for a range of groups but is also economically viable is necessary – making them self sustaining. Example noted include

having a cafe, catering for business meetings, running courses and hires to various activity groups.

The need for social spaces for the whole community, and for specific groups (for example for teenagers, or for older people) is frequently cited. New health services, school places, green routes, youth provision and shops were also mentioned as being required in some parts of the area.

Where there is an opportunity to plan such amenities in at the outset, the location of these 'hubs' must be carefully considered as to ensure that, they are not seen to be specifically geared to serving either the pre-existing or new residential areas (this can create barriers in respect of perceived accessibility and community ownership). Locations need to be found that work for new and existing residents, and (in some places) that address shortfall of provision in specific areas, neighbourhoods or villages.

Conversely, it is vital to consider the specific needs of key localities. For example, communities that are more isolated because to their rural location report preferring (and wishing to make greater use of) more localised facilities and amenities. It is possible that individuals residing in more built up areas are more willing to travel to access bigger more resourceful community/social sites; however there is also experience that in more densely populated areas residents still can be unwilling to travel far for local amenities and situating facilities in town centres leaves new developments with unmet needs. The nature of the management of these sites is also very important; it is evident from consultation that affordability and viability are often conflicting factors.

Aside from dual use hubs, consultation highlighted a desire for more indoor and outdoor multi-use spaces to provide activity for people across a range of ages. One example cited was that of a play park for children and young people attached to an outdoor gym to cater for parents and other adults. Other facilities/services highlighted as desirable include:

- Allotments
- Seating within open space
- Outdoor gym equipment
- Youth services
- Increased youth provision
- Social spaces

It is widely thought that increased communication between housing developers and existing residents is needed both to allow local people to offer their views and opinions on what they wish to see provided in the area (and do not wish to see). The Council has a critical role to play here and these conversations will need to be brokered carefully and managed so that particular interests do not dominate conversations.

Underutilised sites in the area are reportedly:

- Brizen Youth Centre
- Oakley Neighbourhood Project
- Charlton Kings Parish

*Groups of people in the community whose needs are not being met*

It was suggested that in some localities (particularly rural areas) the older generation, teenagers/students and more deprived individuals and households can feel isolated and some consultees consider this to be due to a lack of facilities to meet their needs to socialise and be active. The limited public transport options available in certain locations are reported to be exacerbating this problem.

Another community group who it is believed need to have their needs more carefully considered are people with disabilities/mental health issues. Certain areas contain higher numbers/proportions of people with disabilities and mental health issues and the prevailing view is that this should be assessed and taken into account. The key advice absorbed is that these demographic factors must be reviewed before plans are made.

Parish councils report having difficulty connecting with older and younger people. It was felt that schemes or initiatives to try and engage with these groups were not being created mainly due to the lack of parish council members and staff that had a full appreciation of or the skills, knowledge and empathy to fully reflect their needs.

*Where people go to meet and socialise with their friends and neighbours in the area*

People and groups meet and socialise in a wide variety of places. 'Friends of' groups often meet at specific parks/gardens/natural greenspace etc., running groups meet in parks and car parks adjacent to bridleways and circular routes, walking groups meet at coffee shops.

These forms of groups and events within communities are considered to be very important to knit together the social fabric of communities. One key mechanism for the integration of existing and new communities is the provision of resource to broker linkages and relationships in respect of these forms of activity for newcomers to pre-established communities and, concurrently, to assist such groups to develop a matching capacity to expand.

*Sport club summary:*

In some cases sports clubs which have ownership or leasehold of their home site may be able to offer opportunity for wider community benefit through use of ancillary facilities or car parking capacity. Use of sports club pitches generally does not extend further than club use with the exception of some schools access in cases where clubs may host school fixtures or festivals.

However, there may be potential for greater use of clubhouse and social facilities by local community groups, particularly midweek when many sports clubs are otherwise unused and often unmanned. Revenue generation is of key importance for sports clubs and letting facilities to other users such as playgroups, senior citizens' clubs or for functions is often a source of additional revenue to strengthen future sustainability. Limited community use of sports club facilities is often due to limited promotion or organisation from within them as many representatives are volunteers and tend to commit the free time they are able to contribute to the delivery of immediately pressing tasks such as pitch maintenance and improving or preparing facilities for sporting use at weekends.

**PART 6: SOCIAL, SPORT AND OPEN SPACES STRATEGY**

The implications for future development are set out under the four dimensions of Social Life's social sustainability framework: amenities & social infrastructure; social & cultural life; voice & influence; and adaptability & resilience.

This section is based on the findings of targeted research around around four strategic developments sites: North West Cheltenham, South Cheltenham, Ashchurch, and Innsworth, Churchdown and Brockhurst. The research included asset mapping, one-to-one interviews, discussion groups bringing together local stakeholders and community activists, data review and four social sustainability assessments for the four areas.

The findings from this research is detailed as understanding and boosting social sustainability is context specific: what can be understood and what actions are needed will vary in different parts of Cheltenham and Tewkesbury depending on a number of interconnected factors, from geography to demographics and local history.

This section summarises the implications for new development for the four sites, to help equip the council and developers with knowledge and analysis about what is needed to support future communities (including both existing and new residents) to thrive. Detailed findings for each site are in the report "Cheltenham & Tewksbury: social sustainability across four sites"

The four social sustainability assessments are included at the end of this section.

### *Amenities & social infrastructure*

◄ Building links between existing and new communities could be achieved by festivals/events, and by new facilities being shared by both communities
◄ It is important that new provision is accessible for new and existing residents, this will help bring different groups of residents together; this was identified as a particular priority for North West Cheltenham.
◄ It is also important that new provision and facilities address current gaps in provision, for example there are fewer community and commercial facilities in Northway than Ashchurch and this could be remedied through new development. Hesters Way also emerged as a location that was less well served.
◄ Steps need to be taken to ensure that new development does not compete with existing facilities, but supports them to grow. For example in south Cheltenham there is a need to avoid competition with fragile retail in Bath Road and Salisbury Road; in Innsworth, Churchdown and Brockworth, it is important that any new community facilities do not undermine existing facilities. New provision needs to be developed in tandem with what is already there so it can support existing provision to grow.
◄ New school places will be a priority. In some areas new schools will be needed, in others expansion of schools rather than new schools is preferred as this can also strengthen community links and networks between existing and new communities.
◄ Green routes are needed to connect existing neighbourhoods to the countryside – this will help maintain the sense of place and access to the countryside.
◄ Social facilities are needed to cater for more isolated residents, particularly the elderly.
◄ There is also a need for youth facilities/services.
◄ New social and retail facilities associated with any new development should be positioned to support use by existing residents.
◄ There are community concerns about loss of affordable housing.
◄ Measures are needed to alleviate increasing traffic – including improved roads, regular public transport, better cycle routes.

‹ More (either expanded or new) health provision and social spaces were identified as being needed.

‹ New business models and management models are needed for community facilities to secure long term viability, for example in North West Cheltenham where more funding has been available in the past to tackle relative deprivation. Innsworth Village Hall was cited as an example of a facility needing investment.

‹ Pockets of deprivation need to be recognised and serviced to meet their particular needs.

### Social & cultural life

‹ Activities and festivals that boost a shared local identity and sense of belonging will be important. Existing events should be supported and widen their participant-base to encourage new residents to attend – the emphasis should be on bringing new and existing communities together, rather than the provision of new events for new residents. This approach can help to strengthen civic pride and identity.

‹ Any new community facilities should strengthen existing networks and care must be taken that they do not undermine them by duplicating activities. New facilities should create focal areas for the community to meet, providing both formal and informal meeting spaces. Specific examples include North West Cheltenham where there has been more support for community facilities, and here existing clubs and activities should be encouraged to open or extend their activities. In Ashchurch, working with the military is important to make sure their social activities complement rather than duplicate other activities. Northway Volunteers were identified as an organisation that is working well to support the community.

‹ Existing clubs and societies should be encouraged to open/extend their activities to in-coming residents.

‹ Churches are an important element in the social fabric and are a valuable social asset for new developments.

‹ There is a balance between creating new identities for new developments and merging them with nearby towns. How this is resolved in each case is dependent on the nature of the development and town. For example in South Cheltenham, there is a concern that the new development will be much more distant from Cheltenham centre than adjacent neighbourhoods and a new identify for the new development will therefore be needed. For North West Cheltenham any new development needs to develop its own place identity to sit alongside strong local village identities. Although the former have been absorbed into Cheltenham they have kept their own sense of place.

‹ However, in some cases promoting the linkages between places and a sense of shared identity will be important to encourage residents to use facilities in other places, for example in Innsworth and Brockworth, and similarly for Northway and Ashchurch.

‹ Different issues will arise about relationships between new and existing population depending on context. For example for south Cheltenham, the existing community is very affluent and likely to be similar to new residents in this respect, so the small number of more deprived or different people could become very isolated when the number of homes grows. North West Cheltenham however is more deprived and current mixed demographic is functioning well. Maintaining this mix in the future through activities and provision is important.

*Voice & influence*

‹ There are some examples of strong existing initiatives. These include the Parish Councils, Hesters Way Partnership, Neighbourhood Planning, Big Local, and local schools. For example, the work of the Barnwood Trust, community organisers and neighbourhood plans, that cover Leckhampton and Warden Hill, were also cited as working well. These networks and groups need to be involved in developing plans, and in facilitating engagement. Respecting existing structures could help make local residents feel they have more influence over developments.

‹ The role of parishes is important: there are debates about whether existing parishes should be expanded or new parishes created. In Ashworth the possibility of establishing a new parish for the new development was suggested; however in this area the two existing parishes working together and possibly expanding their footprints in the future could be the most effective way of influencing new developments. For North Cheltenham, the possibility of extending parish boundaries should also be considered.

‹ There is a need to support local volunteering initiatives, building on current strong level of volunteering in some areas and addressing accessibility for ageing volunteers.

‹ It is important to ensure all residents are given the opportunity to participate in available activities, services and initiatives - using multiple methods to engage them both on- and offline.

‹ Community organisations can tap into new networks not already engaged in local issues (as well as those who are) to try and activate residents who do not normally participate in civic activities.

‹ More support is needed for BAME residents and for young people to develop a voice within existing structures.

‹ The long-term sustainability of community organisations and the facilities/activities they manage is important – and support is needed to build viable business models. This will help them to continue to provide current levels of service and support and expand to meet the needs of new residents. The long term sustainability of community provision emerged as a particular as an issue in North Cheltenham and Ashchurch.

‹ Some community groups that give residents a voice are struggling, support is needed with management, volunteer recruitment and business planning.

‹ All community organisations could benefit from support to help them understand how to provide for new residents and articulate and advocate for all residents' needs and wishes.

‹ Engagement needs to be sensitive to different levels of community capacity. For example, the relative vulnerability of many of Innsworth's residents was highlighted.

‹ Residents associations for new developments need to include existing residents and build on existing activism; this is especially relevant to North Cheltenham.

‹ A small grants pot for local activities to get people engaged and activated would help encourage a shared sense of responsibility and build shared interests between new and existing residents.

*Adaptability & resilience*

‹ The limitations of space and provision and stress on existing facilities from a growing population is a challenge to future resilience.

‹ The assets supporting existing residents – from schools' community activities to local events and community centres – need to be supported to expand to meet the needs of new residents. Strengthening existing assets, from volunteering networks to parishes, can send out a message that development can provide benefits to existing residents and that provision can keep up with growth.

‹ Strong community networks and organisations – such as in North West Cheltenham – are an asset but could become overwhelmed by the needs of new residents. In this area

these structures are particularly important for supporting more deprived residents

◄ It is important that the partnership structures and services which support more deprived residents, who are often isolated, are maintained. This will ensure that tensions between different groups do not increase.

◄ Community facilities need to become viable in the long term, with sustainable business models, to offset the impact of decreasing funding. It is important to both sustain successful initiatives like Brockworth Community Project, and improve what is working less well.

◄ There is a need to provide support to meet the needs of a growing older population and disadvantaged, often isolated, residents.

◄ Ensuring good facilities – including schools – for children can attract younger families to the area.

◄ Neighbourhood Plans need to be integrated into plans for new developments, and new developments into neighbourhood plans.

***Social sustainability assessments for four sites***

*South Cheltenham: social sustainability assessment of neighbouring areas*



**Voice & influence**; **amenities & social infrastructure**; and **social & cultural life** are all stronger than would be expected.

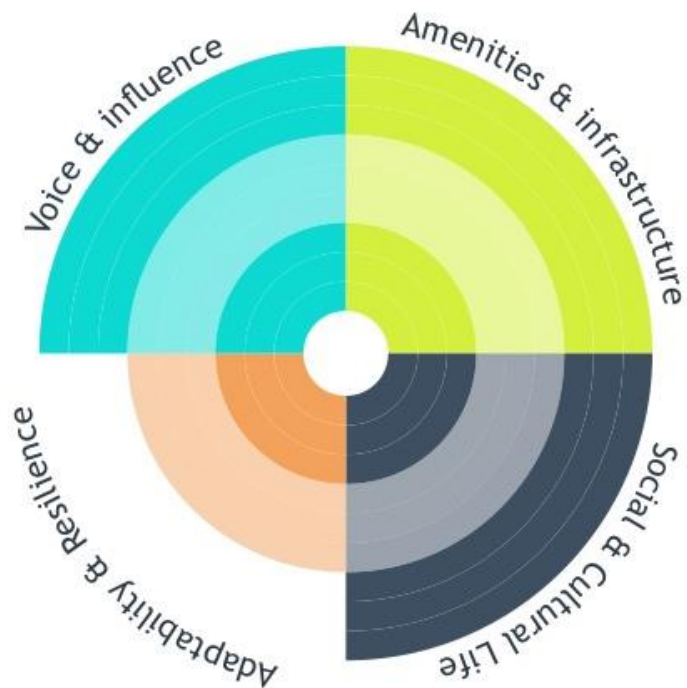**Adaptability & resilience** is what would be expected in comparable areas.
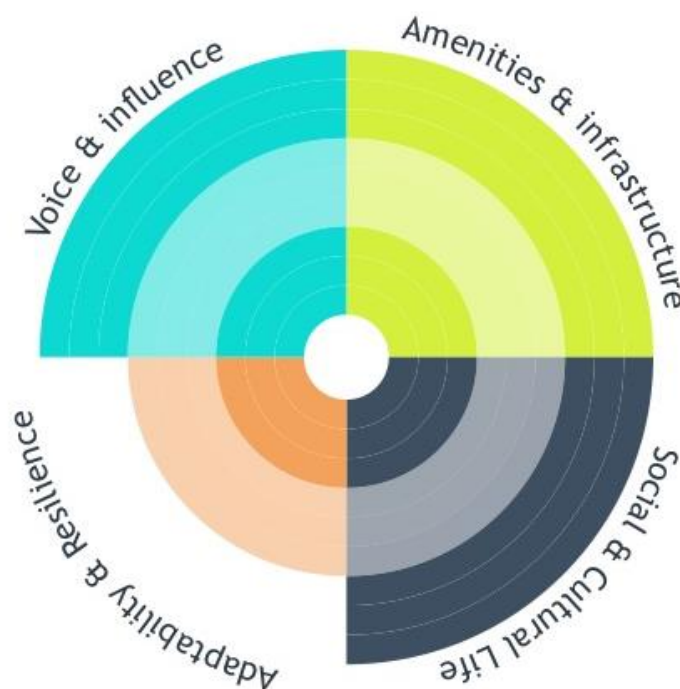
*North west Cheltenham: social sustainability assessment of neighbouring areas*

**Voice & influence;
amenities & social
infrastructure**; and **social
& cultural life** are all
stronger than would be
expected.

**Adaptability & resilience**
is what would be expected
in comparable areas.



*Ashchurch: social sustainability assessment of neighbouring areas*

**Voice & influence;
amenities & social
infrastructure**; and **social
& cultural life** are all what
would be expected in
comparable areas.

**Adaptability & resilience**
is weaker than what would
be expected in
comparable areas.

*Innsworth, Churchdown and Brockworth: social sustainability assessment of neighbouring areas*

**In Churchdown & Brockworth:**
**Voice & influence**; **amenities & social infrastructure**; **social & cultural life** and **adaptability & resilience** are all stronger than would be expected in comparable areas.

**In Innsworth:**
**Voice & influence**; **amenities & social infrastructure**; **social & cultural life** are all weaker than would be expected. **Adaptability & resilience** is what would be expected in comparable areas.



Churchdown

Brockworth

Innsworth