



The Cheltenham Plan 2011-2031

INTEGRATED SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

ADOPTION STATEMENT
July 2020

Cheltenham Borough Council The Cheltenham Plan (2011-2031)

INTEGRATED APPRAISAL (IA) Sustainability Appraisal (SA); Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA); Health Impact Assessment (HIA); Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA); Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

IA Adoption Statement July 2020

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This IA Adoption Statement

- 1 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a systematic process that must be carried out during the preparation of a Local Plan relating to development – as set out in Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and in paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF¹, revised 2019).
- 2 SA incorporates the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) that seeks to provide a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to promoting sustainable development by integrating environmental considerations into the process of preparing certain plans and programmes. The EU Directive is implemented in the UK through the SEA Regulations (2004)².
- 3 In addition, the Council chose to integrate the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) processes within the overarching SA/SEA process. HIA is not a statutory requirement for Councils; however, health considerations are a requirement of the SEA process and thus the overall SA process. Public bodies have a duty³ to assess the impact of their policies on different population groups to ensure that discrimination does not take place and where possible, to promote equality of opportunity. The SA, SEA, HIA and EqIA therefore all form part of the Integrated Appraisal (IA) process for the Cheltenham Plan.
- 4 The Council is also required to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Cheltenham Plan. The HRA process has its own legislative drivers and requirements; whilst the different processes can inform each other, it is important that the HRA remains distinguishable from the wider IA process. The HRA process has been undertaken in parallel to the IA and its findings have informed the IA but the details have been reported separately.
- 5 The IA process comprises a number of stages that are designed to comply with the requirements of the SEA Regulations and as guided through Government Planning Practice⁴. This IA Adoption Statement satisfies the SA/SEA requirements for post adoption (Stage E) and demonstrates compliance with the requirements of the SEA Regulations as follows:
 - (a) *how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;*
 - (b) *how the environmental report has been taken into account;*

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents/made>

³ Equality Act, 2010

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal>

(c) how opinions expressed in response to— (i) the invitation referred to in regulation 13(2)(d); (ii) action taken by the responsible authority in accordance with regulation 13(4), have been taken into account;

(d) how the results of any consultations entered into under regulation 14(4) have been taken into account;

(e) the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and

(f) the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

- 6 SA should demonstrate how the plan has addressed relevant economic, social and environmental objectives (including opportunities for net gains). Significant adverse impacts on these objectives should be avoided and, wherever possible, alternative options which reduce or eliminate such impacts should be pursued.

Development of the Cheltenham Plan 2031

- 7 The Cheltenham Borough Council has prepared a new Local Plan in consideration of the revised NPPF, changed local circumstances, and the progress of the Gloucester, Cheltenham & Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (GCT JCS, adopted December 2017)⁵. The GCT JCS (2011-2031) sets out the housing and employment needs for the Cheltenham Borough area including the strategic direction for development growth with Policies (Strategic, Core, Allocation, and Delivery). The Cheltenham Plan (CP), covering the administrative area of Cheltenham Borough, will guide development in the local area and will be used in combination with the JCS.
- 8 The GCT JCS through Strategic Policy SP1 Need for Development sets out the requirement for approximately 35,175 new homes and land to support approximately 39,500 new jobs. This is to be delivered by development within existing urban areas through district plans, existing commitments, urban extensions to Cheltenham and Gloucester, and the provision of Strategic Allocations at Ashchurch. The housing requirement for the Cheltenham Borough Council area is for at least 10,917 new homes.
- 9 The Cheltenham Plan presents an overall Vision that is organised with objectives through three themes A-C:
- *Cheltenham is a place where people live in strong, safe, healthy, well-served and well-connected communities*

⁵ <https://www.jointcorestrategy.org/adopted-joint-core-strategy>

- *Cheltenham is a place with a prosperous and enterprising economy where education and employment opportunities are increasing and diversifying, where businesses choose to invest and where the benefits are felt by all.*
 - *Cheltenham is a place where the quality and sustainability of our cultural assets and natural and built environment are valued and recognised locally, nationally and internationally and tourists choose to visit and return to.*
- 10 The scale and distribution of new development is directed by JCS Policies SP1-2 and detailed through Local Policies EM1-6 and H1-2. JCS Policies are supported through Local Policies to reflect the Cheltenham characteristics and provide local guidance on design requirements, Green Belt, landscape and the Cotswold AONB, the historic environment, biodiversity & geodiversity, health & environmental quality, housing mix & standards, gypsies, travellers & travelling showpeople, green infrastructure, renewable energy & low carbon, social & community infrastructure, and transport.
- 11 The CP allocates 12 local (non-strategic) sites for new housing through Local Policy H1 whilst mixed use development is supported through 4 local sites allocated in Local Policy H2. Policy GT1 Gypsy, Traveller & Travelling Showpeople Sites sets out a location for 3 pitches at Mill Lane. Policies HM1-5 set out guidance for specific types of housing – student; elderly; loss of residential accommodation; agriculture & forestry dwellings; and houses in multiple occupation.
- 12 Considerable work and consultation have been undertaken since early preparation in 2015 to develop the Local Plan. Various studies were undertaken to provide the evidence⁶ base to inform decision-making, including housing, retail, and employment needs; transport; flood risk assessments; landscape assessments relating to the Cotswold AONB; open/green space & sports facilities; ecology studies; and historic environmental appraisals. Systematic assessments of potential site options for possible allocation were also undertaken.
- 12 The proposed draft Cheltenham Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination by a planning inspector on 3 October 2018. Hearing sessions were held at the Borough Council offices 13-15 and 26-28 February 2019). The Inspector advised in her Post Hearing Note (April 2019) that she considered the Cheltenham Plan to be a Plan that could be found sound subject to Main Modifications (MMs). Following additional work, the proposed MMs to the draft CP were published for public consultation between 4 November and 16 December 2019. The Inspector in her final report (17 March 2020) concluded that with the recommended main modifications, the Cheltenham Plan satisfies the requirements of Section 20(5) of the 2004 Act and meets the criteria for soundness in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 13 In accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), at each stage of the development of the Local Plan, formal and public consultation was undertaken to help ensure that

⁶ https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/46/planning_policy/1034/the_cheltenham_plan/3

stakeholders' views were taken into consideration in the next steps of plan preparation. Issues raised, and responses prepared have been documented during the development of the Local Plan and published on the Council's website⁷.

How environmental & sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Local Plan; How the Sustainability/Environmental Report has been taken into account

- 14 During the plan-making process, IA (incorporating SEA) has been carried out as an iterative and ongoing process to inform decision making for the developing Local Plan. The IA was undertaken in accordance with government guidance⁸ which encourages a staged approach that integrates appraisal to consider the effects of the emerging plan on socio-economic as well as environmental factors. Since 2015, independent specialist consultants were appointed to carry out the IA for the Council. They worked closely with the plan-making team in an iterative way such that the findings and recommendations from the IA were integrated into each developing stage of the Local Plan.
- 15 The IA of the Local Plan built upon the assessments carried out for the JCS to ensure compatibility and continuity of assessments with more locally specific thresholds and criteria relevant to Cheltenham incorporated into the assessment for the CP. The IA used the same SA Framework developed during the SA scoping process (May 2016) as the basis for assessing the emerging CP - and as explained in Section 2 of the submitted SA Report (November 2017). Relevant plans/programmes had been reviewed; baseline information regarding the character of the area and its likely evolution collated and analysed; and sustainability problems, issues and opportunities had been identified during the SA scoping to compile a Framework of Objectives and Sub-Objectives/Decision-Aiding Questions that seek to resolve the sustainability issues identified and relevant to the plan and the Cheltenham Borough Council area. The assessment used both quantitative and qualitative assessments, including defined thresholds of significance, where possible.
- 16 The SA considered the likely significant effects of the implementation of the Local Plan on the sustainability objectives for the Cheltenham Borough Council area. For each aspect of the CP, the assessment against the SA Objectives was recorded with a narrative provided describing any significant effects identified, mitigation of any significant negative effects, and any suggestions for enhancing potential beneficial effects. In line with requirements of the SEA Regulations, the appraisal considered effects including short, medium and long term, permanent, and temporary, positive and negative, secondary, cumulative and synergistic, wherever possible and relevant. Any gaps or difficulties were also reported. The IA was informed by best available information and data to deal with the effects of the policies of the CP as a whole.

⁷ https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/46/planning_policy/1040/statement_of_community_involvement

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal>

- 17 There is limited possibility for investigating strategic options through the Cheltenham Plan. The Strategy and Development Principles are underpinned by a City Centre first approach that has developed over considerable time and study with the JCS, including testing through SA. Potential site allocation options were investigated, tested through SA and were the subject of the IA Report which accompanied the Preferred Options Plan (October 2016) on consultation. In that way, relevant alternatives have been tested through the IA process in an iterative and ongoing way to inform plan-making. The IA reported outline reasons for progressing or rejecting potential options for allocation. The findings and recommendations of the IA informed plan-making and were integrated into the development of the Local Plan - and as set out in the Submitted IA Report (November 2017).
- 19 Overall, the IA found that the Cheltenham Plan is likely to have positive effects for IA objectives for housing, employment/economy, and communities, that are cumulative in the longer-term. There is the potential for negative effects on the highway network, landscape/townscape and the historic environment, but mitigation is provided through local policies and the location of local allocations to minimise effects. The JCS includes mitigation measures and specific requirements for strategic level development – A6 North West Cheltenham and A11 West Cheltenham. Positive effects are indicated through policy on green space and green infrastructure that will have positive effects for both biodiversity and human health.
- 20 The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) found that the Cheltenham Local Plan is unlikely to have negative effects on protected characteristics or persons identified under the Equality Act 2010 and as a result a full EqIA will not be required. The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) found that the Cheltenham Local Plan is considered unlikely to have significant effects on any European sites, alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.
- 21 Following submissions to the examination and discussions at the hearings, proposed Main Modifications to the CP were prepared and subject to IA. Many amendments are for updating and to provide further clarity and as such are not significant for SA and HRA. Many of the MMs were refinements that strengthened policies, including site-specific requirements for flood risk management and sewerage infrastructure capacity, confirming certainty of implementation of such mitigation measures and confirming previous SA findings for neutral effects.
- 22 The key change was the inclusion of two new local policies CP Policy BG1 Cotswold Beechwoods SAC Recreation Pressure and BG2 Cotswold Beechwoods SAC Air Quality. These policies provide clear and comprehensive guidance and requirements as interim safeguarding mechanisms whilst the JCS authorities together with relevant adjacent authorities at Cotswold and Stroud District Councils continue recreational studies and progress mitigation measures. These additional policies address the concerns that had been raised by Natural England.
- 23 These matters were explained and assessed in the IA Addendum Report (July 2019) accompanying the proposed Main Modifications to the Local Plan.

Those MMs identified as potentially significant for SA/SEA and HRA were then considered using the same methods and assessors as for the submitted IA and HRA Reports.

How the results of consultation have been taken into account

- 24 Consultation is an important aspect of SA and there was statutory and public consultation at each key stage of the Local Plan preparation and the SA as follows:

Cheltenham LP Stage and Documents Consultation	IA Stage and Documents Consultation
Cheltenham Plan Scope Consultation (Regulation 18) July to September 2013	N/A
Draft Vision and Objectives published February 2014	N/A
Issues and Options Consultation June 2015	IA Draft Scoping Report Consultation June 2015
Preferred Options Regulation 18 Consultation November 2016 / January 2017	Draft IA Report Consultation November / December 2016
Pre-Submission Draft Plan Regulation 19 Consultation November-December 2017	Draft IA Report Regulation 19 Consultation November-December 2017
Submission Plan Submission to the Secretary of State 3 October 2018	Final IA Report Submission to the Secretary of State 3 October 2018
Examination Hearings 13-15 & 26-28 February 2019	Examination Hearings 13-15 & 26-28 February 2019
Main Modifications Consultation 4 November – 16 December 2019	IA Addendum Report Consultation 4 November – 16 December 2019
CP Adoption July 2020	IA Adoption Statement July 2020

- 25 IA and consultation responses have been considered in an iterative and ongoing way with the plan-making process and in accordance with the requirements of the SEA Regulations. Representations have been recorded and the responses made to issues and concerns raised have been published, including at key statutory stages, as follows:

- SA Scoping Report June 2015
- Appendix V of Preferred Options IA Report (October 2016) summarises IA representations to consultation and responses
- Appendix V of Pre-Submission IA Report (November 2017) summarises IA representations to consultation and responses

- The IA Addendum Report (July 2019) outlines issues raised and discussed at the examination and resulting in the proposed Main Modifications

All consultation representations and responses are available on the Council's website under pages for the Cheltenham Plan⁹.

Reasons for choosing the Local Plan as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives

- 26 The SEA Regulations require assessment of the likely significant effects of implementing the plan and "reasonable alternatives" taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan; and the reasons for selecting alternatives should be outlined in the Report. The UK Government's planning practice guidance¹⁰ states that "reasonable alternatives are the different realistic options considered by the plan-maker in developing the policies in its plan. They must be sufficiently distinct to highlight the different sustainability implications of each so that meaningful comparisons can be made. The alternatives must be realistic and deliverable".
- 27 There is limited possibility for investigating strategic options for the Cheltenham Plan as this was investigated through the preparation of the GCT JCS, including testing and reporting through IA. However, potential site allocation options were investigated and tested through IA using the IA framework of objectives in a comparable and consistent manner. The findings were reported in the IA Report (November 2017) and detailed in Appendix VII (2016 & updated 2017). The reasons for selecting and rejecting site options were outlined in Table 5.1 and in accordance with the requirements of the SEA Regulations.
- 28 The 'do-nothing' scenario is not an option for a Local Plan as councils are required to provide for their identified development needs. However, this was considered by the SA process and the IA reported that significant negative effects on environmental factors were likely without a plan and that positive effects for socio-economic factors were less likely to be implemented. Doing nothing is not a reasonable alternative for the Cheltenham Plan since a strategy with locally relevant Policies and local (non-strategic) site allocations is required to avoid negative effects and ensure a sustainable delivery of the required development in the Cheltenham area and as identified in the JCS (Policies SP1 & SP2).
- 29 Overall, the reasons for choosing the Cheltenham Plan as adopted include that the adopted Plan progresses the overall Vision and for high quality development in the Cheltenham Borough area, meeting identified needs for housing and employment whilst avoiding significant change to the intrinsic character of the area, and securing the most benefits and the least negative effects for sustainable development.

⁹ https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/46/planning_policy/1034/the_cheltenham_plan/2

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal>

Measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant sustainability/ environmental effects of the implementation of the Local Plan

- 30 The SEA Regulations require that the significant environmental effects of implementing the plan should be monitored with the purpose of identifying unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and being able to undertake appropriate remedial action. Local Planning Authorities are required to produce Monitoring Reports¹¹ on the progress of Local Plans. Government Guidance on SA/SEA advises a pragmatic approach with shared monitoring for the SA/SEA and the Plan.
- 31 The GCT JCS includes Part 7 on Monitoring & Review. The CP includes section 19 on Delivery, Monitoring & Review includes a wide range of indicators, relevant to each of the 3 main themes for the plan, and that also relate to the SA Framework. It is considered that these indicators will be sufficient to identify any unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and provide information on the predicted effects from the IA.
- 32 Upon adoption of the Cheltenham Plan, the Delivery, Monitoring & Review Framework of Indicators will be used as the basis for future annual monitoring by the Council and incorporated into the Council's Monitoring Report available to view on the Council's website. No additional proposed monitoring that might be required as part of the SEA process was indicated from the findings of the IA.

¹¹ Cheltenham Borough Annual Monitoring Reports available at:
https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/46/planning_policy/378/local_development_framework_evidence_base/5