

Statement from Fairford Town Council re Local Plan Reg 18 Consultation 2025

Fairford Town Council wish to express our frustration that Cotswold District Council's efforts to argue for a lower Housing Requirement figure have so far been rejected by Government without adequate consideration of the particular circumstances of the District within what is effectively the overlap of a number of separate labour and housing market areas (including a National/International one) and without due allowance for the constraints imposed by National policies both within and outside the Cotswolds National Landscape area. With a high level of out-commuting to jobs elsewhere, the District is effectively being asked to provide – by default – for part of the housing need which is actually related to the economy in these other areas. This is clearly in conflict with the Government's objective of moving towards larger combined authorities for strategic planning and is simply unreasonable in the present circumstances with Local Government reorganisation impending. It is simply likely to result in a large number of the wrong type of homes being built in what will turn out to be the wrong places, to suit large housebuilders' profits rather than meet actual housing needs. This will also be extremely damaging to the local environment in areas that are supposed to be covered by a nature improvement plan.

Because Cotswold District is geographically extensive and in general terms poorly connected, with an economy which is supposedly based on 'tourism' and agriculture (relatively low wage industries), housing in one part of the District is in many cases wholly unsuited for accessing employment in another. This is particularly the case for those on lower incomes. E.g. Housing for carers in Stow-on-the-Wold needs to be in Stow-on-the-Wold, not Fairford or the Ampneys. This is a different situation to that in large Metropolitan areas which are generally self-contained and well-connected by public transport.

Infrastructure is Key

The communities outside the CNL area, which comprise roughly half the existing housing and population, have already suffered from significant major housing development over the last 12+ years, which has been imposed without commensurate local infrastructure/service improvements including for roads, sewage treatment systems, employment, healthcare and public transport. On top of this – as the result of a further multiplier (x2+) which results from National policy to protect rural areas and flaws in the workplace-based earnings affordability measure – we are now apparently expected to accommodate another similar increase which will add further to the existing problems. Based on past experience, we have zero confidence that this new development would be made to contribute adequately to meeting these infrastructure needs (These 'external' costs of developing here are unavoidably higher). This would further impact living conditions for existing communities and damage the attractiveness for the important visitor economy in the Cotswold Water Park (aka Cotswold Lakes) area in the south of the District, which is already suffering from the widespread effects of sewage pollution and other service deficiencies – or indeed for other new economic development which could help to raise wages/salaries and hence improve affordability in the area. The on-going precarious financial situation of Thames Water does not help to provide certainty.

Moreover, without this infrastructure, which will be inevitably costly, the housing target is most unlikely to be deliverable in practice and this would simply put us back into the situation of more unplanned development with insufficient supporting infrastructure.