

Report for Stow Town Council July 2026

I am sorry that I can't be at the Town Council meeting, but I would be very happy to meet with any councillors over the next couple of days to discuss a response to the draft local plan.

There are two major changes which will affect local government being processed at the moment

Local government reorganisation.

We now know that there will be one unitary authority for our county and that it will be called Gloucestershire Council. Many surrounding authorities have been divided into smaller unitaries, but a single authority for Gloucestershire is welcomed by most of the local councils in the county. It means that services such as social care and fire and rescue will continue to be managed as single services for the county, avoiding duplication. A priority will be more community engagement and empowerment, and there will be neighbourhood groups involving town and parish councils which will have their own budgets. The legal change, a structural change order, will be made at the end of this year. Elections to a shadow unitary authority will take place in May 2027. It is proposed to align Town and Parish Council elections to the timetables for the unitary authority elections. CDC along with the other six local authorities in the county will cease to exist on "vesting day" which will be 1st April 2028. The shadow authority will have made many decisions by then and the workforce will have been transferred but changes will continue for years. Further information can be found on the Future Gloucestershire website, and there will be regular briefings, roadshows and weekly updates.

Local plan update. The updated local plan is in the process of review by the district council at the moment. a short summary can be found at :

<https://news.cotswold.gov.uk>

Papers have been published for review by the overview and scrutiny (O&S) committee and the full draft plan can be found by going to the website, cotswold.gov.uk. Under Council and Democracy you will find the meetings calendar. On August 3rd, there is a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, clicking on that on the calendar will give you access to the agenda with the entire draft plan which is over 1800 pages long. Most of the proposed new housing will be built on strategic sites of over 350 houses. Most are in the South Cotswolds. In the north, 2,217 houses are proposed for Moreton and 1,238 for Mickelton. Strategic sites bring infrastructure with them, schools, doctors' surgeries, road improvements etc. The vast majority of building is outside the National Landscape but smaller non strategic sites are also proposed. 53 new houses over three sites are proposed for Stow, details are on pages 404-408 of the plan. I have not had time to read through

the entire plan, but so far, I have not seen other proposals for Stow including new provision for parking and employment sites. After being reviewed by O&S, the plan goes to cabinet for approval before being considered at an extra full council meeting on 12th August. There will then be a period of public consultation. As far as I am aware, the extra council meeting will be open to the public and webcast, so you might like to watch the discussions. Unfortunately, I am away but I will ask colleagues to speak on my behalf and I can also send a note to officers before the draft plan is published. I will raise the issues of parking and employment, as well as the importance of allowing some building within the national landscape to maintain the viability and vitality of smaller communities..There will be a series of briefings and exhibitions during August and September. We can work together on a response to the plan when we have had time to look at it more thoroughly.

Toilets. It would be timely to raise the possibility of the Town Council taking over the two toilet blocks now that we have a decision over local government reorganisation. If you would like to revisit the idea, I can put you in touch with the appropriate officers