

Dear Cllr Cottam

Thank you for your email and for setting out so clearly the concerns of the Parish Council and Mickleton residents.

I understand why the proposals have caused shock and anger. Growth on this scale would represent a major change for Mickleton, and the increase - compared to both the allocation in the existing adopted Local Plan and the indicative figure shared at Regulation 18 last year - has understandably left residents asking what has changed and whether their earlier representations were heard.

The Plan process and next steps

Firstly, please allow me to clarify the process we are moving through. At this stage, the Plan has been published for councillors to consider. It will be discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee this afternoon (3 August), by Cabinet on 6 August and by Full Council on 12 August.

If Council agrees to the Plan, a six-week public consultation will run from 24 August to 5 October. This will be the opportunity for residents and the Parish Council to comment formally on the proposals, and all representations will be passed to the independent Planning Inspector alongside the Plan.

At the end of my note, I pick up on our plans to engage with Mickleton during the consultation period.

National policy context and housing need

As you rightly note, housing need is set nationally. Cotswold District Council's members unanimously agreed last year that the best way to respond to that need is by updating its Local Plan.

This is because the context has changed substantially since the existing Plan was prepared. In December 2024, the Government changed the mandatory method for calculating housing need. The new Plan must now address an assessed need for 17,918 homes between 2026 and 2043. In the meantime, those changes mean the Council can currently demonstrate only a 1.8-year housing land supply.

National policy – which sits outside of the Council's control – requires councils to be able to demonstrate at least a five-year supply of housing. Where it is unable to do so, applications for housing must be looked upon more favourably, even where they conflict with the adopted Local Plan. Refusing applications without robust and defensible planning grounds would expose the Council to expensive appeals, with limited prospects of success, and the risk of substantial costs being borne by local taxpayers.

In recent months, we have already seen the consequences of this in Moreton-in-Marsh and Lechlade, where applications previously refused by the Council have been overturned by the Planning Inspectorate on appeal.

The responsible course is therefore to shape growth through an up-to-date Plan – identifying the most sustainable locations, and requiring homes, services and infrastructure to be planned together.

Development pressure in Mickleton

The impact of changes to national policy, and the urgent need for a new Plan, are already being seen in Mickleton.

Earlier this year, the Council's Planning Committee resolved to permit up to 95 homes north of Tops Nursery. The site lies outside the adopted Development Boundary and conflicted with the existing Local Plan, but national policy meant the development could only be refused if its adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweighed its benefits.

The same officer report also recorded pending applications for a further 60 homes at Foxwold House and up to 170 homes north of Broadway Road, describing Mickleton as being under significant development pressure.

Without an up-to-date Plan, sites can continue to come forward separately and be judged individually under national policy. Developers may make site-specific contributions, but these do not provide a comprehensive answer to Mickleton's cumulative infrastructure needs - issues that residents have consistently raised with the Council.

The Local Plan enables us to consider sites together, require a coordinated masterplan, and connect new homes to the facilities needed to support them.

Mickleton in the existing Local Plan, and the new Plan

The adopted Local Plan (covering the period 2011 – 2031) identified Mickleton as one of 17 principal settlements in the district, and described it as a sizeable village catering for many day-to-day needs. But that plan made no further housing allocations because of environmental constraints, the size of the village, recent growth, and the lack at that time of developable and deliverable land.

That was a judgement based on the housing requirement, land availability and evidence at the time – not a conclusion that Mickleton was inherently unsustainable.

The new Plan covers a further period to 2043, faces a substantially higher housing requirement as per national policy, and is informed by additional land submissions and a new district-wide evidence base.

That updated evidence concludes that Mickleton has characteristics that support a role in the new strategy. It is an established local service centre, lies outside the Cotswolds National Landscape, is relatively less constrained than many alternatives, and is close to Chipping Campden, Honeybourne railway station, and employment at Meon Vale and Long Marston. A number of the promoted sites adjoin or relate closely to the existing village, while its location provides connections towards Stratford-upon-Avon and the wider North Cotswolds area.

The November 2025 Regulation 18 consultation identified a broad location at Mickleton and an indicative figure of 590 homes. It did not identify precise sites and made clear that figures could change following a Call for Sites (which ran alongside the Regulation 18 consultation in November), further assessment and masterplanning.

Subsequent work concluded that a larger, comprehensively planned development to the north and west of Mickleton could support a coordinated package of homes, services and infrastructure. The current draft proposes 1,238 homes in the strategic allocation, together with three smaller allocations totalling 149 homes.

All sites have been assessed through the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment and Site Selection process, alongside more than 40 evidence documents covering transport, infrastructure, landscape, heritage, flooding, water, ecology, housing and employment need, viability and deliverability. Some sites in Mickleton were rejected because they were poorly related to the village or likely to cause unacceptable harm.

Infrastructure and masterplanning

The main benefit of the proposed approach is the opportunity to plan a holistic community, rather than a collection of separate housing estates.

The draft Plan requires a comprehensive masterplan across the different landholdings and includes:

- a new two-form-entry primary school and early-years provision
- a local centre, community hub and local employment opportunities
- sports facilities, play areas and substantial public open space
- improved bus services and walking and cycling connections
- contributions towards secondary education
- water, wastewater, drainage and utility improvements
- green corridors, retained hedgerows and landscape buffers

These are not intended to be optional benefits added after homes have been built. The Plan requires infrastructure to be planned, phased and delivered alongside development, secured through planning conditions, legal agreements and an infrastructure delivery programme.

Transport is a key challenge. The proposed package includes improved bus connections, active travel routes through and around the village, a connection along Long Marston Road towards National Cycle Route 5, and improved links towards Honeybourne and Moreton-in-Marsh. The evidence also identifies where water and wastewater upgrades will be needed so they can be planned and phased with development.

The emerging South Warwickshire Local Plan also means the position at Long Marston must be considered afresh. The new Strategic Transport Assessment recognises the potential impact of further growth there. The Council has engaged with Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwickshire County Council, and I will ask officers to provide the Parish Council with a clear summary of this work and how cumulative growth has been considered.

Landscape and strategic considerations

Protecting the Cotswolds National Landscape is an important national policy requirement which we are unable to affect, and it is a significant constraint – as we have made abundantly clear over the last 18 months. But I want to reassure you that Mickleton is not being singled out for growth simply because it lies outside the National Landscape.

The evidence identifies Mickleton and Moreton-in-Marsh as offering the best opportunities in the north of the district - alongside eight settlements in the south near Cirencester as part of a considered strategy - to combine new homes with infrastructure, services and improved connectivity.

Around 11,000 homes – approximately 73% of all housing allocated in the draft Plan – are directed to the Cirencester and South Cotswold strategy areas. This includes substantial strategic development around Cirencester, Preston and Siddington, as well as at Down Ampney, Fairford, Kemble and Driffield. Over 2,200 homes are also proposed at Moreton-in-Marsh.

The Plan therefore represents a district-wide strategy in which communities across both the north and south are being asked to accommodate significant growth.

I do not underestimate the effect the proposals would have on Mickleton's size and character. The comprehensive masterplan, landscape buffers, and requirements relating to the Conservation Area, historic landscape, Norton Brook and the setting of the National Landscape cannot remove the significance of the change, but they can deliver a substantially better outcome than successive, unrelated and piecemeal developments.

And that is what makes this new plan critical. It seeks to deliver growth with infrastructure, affordable housing, and buildings that seek to respond to the climate emergency.

In my view, the alternatives would be worse for Mickleton and worse for our district.

Engagement and next steps with the community

The representations made at Regulation 18 identified precisely the matters the subsequent evidence and development framework have sought to address: infrastructure, transport, character, landscape and services. I appreciate that the increase in numbers makes it difficult to see how that feedback influenced the outcome, but there will be further opportunity during the consultation to explore this in detail with officers and elected members.

On engagement specifically, the exhibition in Chipping Campden is not a substitute for speaking directly to Mickleton residents. It is intended for residents across the north-western area of the district.

We held an exhibition in Mickleton in November but received feedback that the venue lacked sufficient parking to serve the wider catchment.

However, I can confirm that we are arranging a dedicated public meeting in Mickleton during the consultation period, specifically for Mickleton residents. This will take place in September and be attended by relevant planning officers and councillors, and I will

attend personally. The Council's communications and engagement team is organising similar meetings to cover the other nine strategic sites and will work with your Parish Council to publicise arrangements as soon as possible.

I know this response to your email will not remove the concerns within the village.

However, I hope it makes clear why a comprehensive, infrastructure-led Plan is the responsible course: it gives the Council and communities like Mickleton greater influence over development and provides a framework for creating a properly supported community rather than leaving the village exposed to speculative and disjointed growth.

With kind regards

Mike Every
Leader and Councillor for Siddington & Cerney Rural
Cotswold District Council