

OUR COUNTRYSIDE IS UNDER GRAVE THREAT

PUBLIC MEETING: Leckhampton Primary School, Hall Road on Friday 20th January at 7.30pm
Speakers: Martin Horwood M.P. and Sir Jonathon Porritt

Public Consultation is now underway on the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) which has been drawn up by Officers from Gloucester, Tewkesbury and Cheltenham Councils. The draft plan covers the period up to 2031 and sets out four scenarios with very large housing targets from 16,200 to 41,500 homes, including 1650 for Leckhampton. This leaflet, from LECKHAMPTON GREEN LAND ACTION GROUP (LEGLAG), gives you advice and information on how to respond to the consultation. (Please see our website www.leglag.co.uk)

Response forms and details on the consultation can be found at all public libraries, at the Municipal Offices and on-line at www.gct-jcs.org . It is not necessary to respond using their questionnaire, you can write or email your views in any way you want, but you **must** give your name and address. **(We do not intend to use the questionnaire in our response, because of the way the questions are framed)**. Write to: JCS Consultation, Municipal Offices, Cheltenham, GL50 9SA or email info@gct-jcs.org by 12th February 2012.

We think it is extremely important that **as many household members, and their friends and family, respond to this consultation**. But it is even more important that people who do respond understand the real choices before us. We think the wording of the questionnaire is misleading, because it suggests that there is a choice between “economic prosperity” and “protecting the environment”, and asks for your views on the balance between the two. **THIS IS NONSENSE!** Economic prosperity has very little to do with the planning strategy adopted; it depends mainly on national and international economic conditions, and on the success of local businesses.

The real choice is between different options for where new housing is to be built. Under pressure from developers and from the Government, the planners are proposing that most new housing should be built on “urban extensions” i.e. large new housing estates on existing green fields around the edges of towns, **INCLUDING SOME 1650 HOUSES MOSTLY ON THE LECKHAMPTON FIELDS**. The alternative is to build rather fewer houses on redeveloped land within towns as opportunities arise. This alternative makes developers work harder, reducing their profits, they are pressing for the urban extensions to be approved.

Leckhampton has been unfairly targeted, the plan includes 1,650 houses to be built on open countryside in and next to Leckhampton which will have a huge impact on our area. It will forever change the character of Leckhampton from Rural to Urban, despite the fact that this is designated as safeguarded land by Cheltenham Borough Council who recognise the need for an “Old Leckhampton” conservation area and to protect its rural character. Cheltenham Borough Local Plan Second Review, Inspector’s Report, considers the “*value of the land should be protected as a resource for its recreational, landscape, wildlife and archaeological interest*”.

The leader of the Council, Cllr Steve Jordan, reiterated council policy, ‘to protect open countryside and the greenbelt’, in answer to a question from LEGLAG at the JCS Council in November. The Council will need very large PUBLIC SUPPORT to stay firm on this policy now under JCS attack.

The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) proposes four different options or scenarios:

Scenario A would see 16,200 homes being built by 2031. It would involve building on ‘brownfield’ (previously developed) sites which would mainly be in Gloucester and Cheltenham as well as building where planning permission has already been approved or where land has been allocated in current Local Plans; for example, the site at Farm Lane, Shurdington on the border with Leckhampton is included in Option A for 350 houses because it is already in Tewkesbury Borough Council’s Local Plan.

Scenarios B, C and D would include the housing proposed in Scenario A plus development on new areas of land, including fields in Leckhampton and Shurdington which are earmarked for 1,300 houses. **We therefore do not recommend any of the four Scenarios (A, B, C, or D) as presented by the JCS, but we would support a variation of Scenario A which excluded all development in Leckhampton and adjacent green fields which lie on the border with Shurdington.**

LEGLAG key objections and summary of the JCS evidence base for Leckhampton residents
Cllr Ian 250473

- The JCS has taken no account of **all four previous Inspector's recommendations** who assessed large scale development targeting Leckhampton, all rejected in protection of the rural character **and many sustainability reasons**, Highways have stated that Church Rd cannot take additional traffic and the Shurdington Rd is heavily congested. Air quality figures for Church Rd and Shurdington Rd are already very poor and break EU air pollutant safety limits in the winter months.
- Housing numbers are based on County's projections for population growth, net migration to/from the County and natural growth. The high figures have been derived by assuming a person per dwelling figure of 1.2 compared with the current county figure of 2.25, these **are untested and in disagreement** with the Fordham Gloucester Housing Needs Assessment – Nov 2009, no account has been taken in the JCS that the increase in population for Cheltenham in this period is 10,000, all of whom are in the retired age range.
- The Halcrow JCS Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, July 2011, '*Hatherley & Ham Brook in Leckhampton identified as higher flood risk, a hydraulic model of Ham Brook is required, significant surface water runoff and an area of historic flooding, highways are affected. Where historical records show incidents of flooding and surface water, then these areas should be treated as Flood Zone 3a; at risk and not suitable for development. Areas of existing open space acting as informal flood storage areas should be safeguarded from development*', the open fields at Leckhampton protect areas to the west of the Shurdington Rd from flood risk due to surface water.
- An important part of the JCS Evidence is the Entec Greenbelt review, May 2011, this recommended the farm land south of Farm Lane for *inclusion in the Greenbelt* and marked RED – no development. The AMEC JCS report, Sept 2011, reinforced this view, '*land to the south of Cheltenham (south of Leckhampton, SW of Farm Lane) having the strongest case*'.

There is a genuine question as to how many new houses are needed. Statistical projections suggest that something like 37,000 new homes will be needed by 2031. But these projections assume that the current trend for ever fewer people per house will continue unchecked - this seems very unlikely under current economic circumstances. If the current figure of about 2.5 people per house were to continue unchanged, only about half as many new houses would be needed! If this fall in demand happens, but all the urban extensions are built anyway, we will have needlessly lost a lot of our lovely countryside, and urban regeneration will have been put at risk as well. **This would be criminal folly.**

LEGLAG's response to the Consultation will emphasise three points:

- **The Strategy should be flexible and not assume present trends will continue**
- **The Strategy should protect the most valuable areas for posterity**
- **The land at Leckhampton is a very valuable asset to Cheltenham**

You may think some, or all, of the above points are worth mentioning in your response, however what we ask is that **you please respond** to this extremely important consultation.

PLEASE NOTE: As well as responding to the JCS consultation, please come along to a special meeting we have organised, at which the options for the future of Cheltenham, and in particular, the future of Leckhampton will be discussed.

PUBLIC MEETING: Leckhampton Primary School, Hall Road on Friday 20th January at 7.30pm. **Speakers:** Martin Horwood M.P. and Sir Jonathon Porritt.

ALSO, please try and attend the public Joint Core Strategy (JCS) exhibitions on Friday 20th and Saturday 21st Jan. both 10am to 5pm at Regent Arcade, Cheltenham. This flyer has been published by **Leckhampton Green Land Action Group (LEGLAG)**. Please address any queries to the LEGLAG Chairman, Kit Braunholtz (862327) or to the Secretary, Margaret White (523668). www.leglag.co.uk

Leglag would appreciate it, if you copy your response by email to: enquiries@leglag.co.uk or send a hard copy to: Secretary, LEGLAG, 11 Arden Rd., Cheltenham, GL53 0HG