

Ashleworth Parish Council
Clerk: Tony Eardley
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Dear Sirs/Madam

Ashleworth Parish Council's Response to the Joint Core Strategy (JCS)

We were given to understand that we are able to have an extension to the published deadline for responses of 11 February, to 29th February 2012.

Ashleworth Parish Council (APC) has discussed the JCS and concluded that a number of issues specifically affecting Ashleworth need to be brought to the attention of the JCS team. Also, Tewkesbury Borough Council should consider these issues when developing its local plan, which APC look forward to being consulted on. The following points address these issues. They were publicised to Ashleworth residents and received significant support:

1. Ashleworth must not be grouped for planning purposes with towns like Bishops Cleeve and Winchcombe.

According to the JCS 'Proposed Settlement Hierarchy' (12.2), Ashleworth has been positioned in Settlement Tier 3 '*large settlements*'. Described as having '*important local facilities, reducing the need to travel to principal locations of Cheltenham and Gloucester*'. APC consider it more appropriate to be grouped in Tier 4 as a '*medium settlement*' along with Apperley and Forthampton, described as having '*a reduced level of facilities when compared with larger settlements....*'.

APC take issue with the way Ashleworth has been ranked in the Evidence Base Settlement Audit that informed 'Proposed Settlement Hierarchy'. In particular, where Ashleworth was given points for 'significant local employment', which it does not have and given points for 'secondary services', which it does not have. APC also concur that at no stage was it ever given the opportunity to verify this particular Evidence Base. APC seriously question a methodology that allows a village such as Ashleworth to be grouped with much larger settlements such as Bishops Cleeve.

With a population of approximately 550 people, clearly, Ashleworth is not a '*large settlement*' and should never be regarded as such. It has diminishing facilities and infrastructure that are currently just sufficient to serve the present demographic. Residents also have a significant need to travel into the main conurbations for resources and employment.

2. New housing in Ashleworth should follow the current infilling principle (HOU3) and should not be permitted on green fields outside the village envelope.

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The JCS has maintained that it **will not** change rural settlement boundaries; indeed the TBC JCS seminar on the 19th January reinforced this point on slide 7 of the presentation. APC wish to support this stance and expect it to inform any future developments to the TBC local plan, in particular the next report of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) due in summer 2012. APC was not consulted during the preparation of the initial SHLAA. Most of the sites identified in Ashleworth were 'officer identified' (F sites). These sites had already been reviewed by APC with the TBC Housing Enabling Officer and GRCC as part of a public consultation on Affordable Housing and the majority were deemed to be unsuitable for any development.

3. APC encourage modest developments which include housing within budget for first time buyers and/or suitable for retired people looking to downsize from other properties in the locality.

An Affordable Housing Needs Survey completed in 2009 identified a need for approximately 6 homes to sustain a local requirement. The Ashleworth Parish Plan adopted in 2005, contains a number of guiding principles for new housing, including maintenance of the present nature of the village by limiting the number of new buildings which should, in any case, be designed in sympathy and scale with the character of the village.

APC propose to conduct a formal consultation with the Ashleworth public in the near future, which will inform APC responses to further consultations on the JCS and TBC local plan.

APC has welcomed the opportunity to respond to current proposals presented in the JCS. Please would you confirm that these responses have been received. APC also invite the JCS team and TBC especially to come back with any comments.

Yours sincerely.

Tony Eardley
Clerk Ashleworth PC