



CHELTENHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

2025

Cheltenham Urban Capacity Study



April 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This Urban Capacity Study (UCS) has been prepared using data available at the time of production. It reflects the best information currently accessible regarding land availability, site constraints, and development potential. However, urban environments are dynamic and subject to ongoing change. As such, this study should be regarded as a snapshot in time and will require periodic review to ensure its continued relevance and accuracy. Future updates will incorporate more recent data, including outcomes from ongoing housing monitoring, updated HELAA site assessments, and any changes in planning policy or local circumstances.
2. An UCS is a realistic assessment of sites with potential to come forward for residential development within the Borough's boundaries. It provides evidence to Cheltenham Borough Council regarding options to meet its housing requirements.
3. This study is undertaken in the context of the emerging Strategic and Local Plan (SLP), fulfilling our duty to cooperate and working together with Gloucester City Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council to produce an appropriate development strategy and meet the area's needs.
4. The assessment is informed by 'current' sources, such as sites with planning permission, site allocations, and deliverable sites on the HELAA (Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment) and brownfield register, as well as 'potential' sources, such as long-term vacant properties, public owned sites, windfall sites and Regulation 18 sites. Elected members and parish councils were consulted on potential sources during early 2025. Density multipliers were applied to potential sources to calculate the net developable area of the site.
5. The main finding is that Cheltenham cannot meet its housing requirement by solely relying on its urban land. Even if all the current and potential sites were to come forward, it would only meet around half of its overall requirement.
6. Therefore, to meet Cheltenham's requirements in full, a Green Belt Study will be undertaken, particularly considering 'Grey Belt' land deemed suitable to help meet the need across the SLP area. In addition, effective joint working on the SLP will need to continue under the duty to cooperate and the appropriate development strategy determined to ensure that the needs of the SLP area are met.

1. PART 1: CURRENT SOURCES OF SUPPLY

1.1 Part 1 of this report covers analysis of the urban capacity of current sources of supply that are already in the planning system and that we are aware of split out into separate sections in this report comprising:

- A. Supply from detailed planning permission;
- B. Allocated supply within the Development Plan;
- C. Deliverable sites in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA); and
- D. Deliverable sites on the Brownfield Land Register (BLR) (Part 1)¹.

A. Supply from Detailed Planning Permission

1.2 Figure 1 provides details of sites within Cheltenham Borough by ward that have detailed planning permission, which is where either full or reserved matters permission has been granted as of 31st March 2024. For more details, please see the latest 5 year housing land supply position statement available via

https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/46/planning_policy/378/local_development_framework_evidence_base/2

Figure 1: Supply of net consented dwellings yet to be completed

Ward	Consented dwellings (net) yet to be completed
All Saints	17
Battledown	270
Benhall & The Reddings	9
Charlton Kings	9
Charlton Park	3
College	46
Hesters Way	0
Lansdown	35
Leckhampton	406
Oakley	11
Park	1
Pittville	18
Prestbury	13
Springbank	77
St Marks	24
St Pauls	18
St Peters	65
Swindon Village	291
Up Hatherley	2
Warden Hill	1
Total	1,316

¹ At the time of publication Cheltenham Borough Council did not have a BLR (Part 2). Part 2 of a BLR would show sites granted permission in principle. See [Planning Practice Guidance on Brownfield land registers](#).

1.3 The 1,316 figure above shows the number of new net housing units permitted as of 31st March 2024. Clearly every year, new permissions for large and small developments, will continue to be permitted. This UCS report anticipates which sites these future permissions may be granted upon, for example on allocated sites. Inevitably some windfall permissions will be granted on larger sites that are not yet known about or anticipated. For further discussion on the potential windfall contribution to urban capacity see Part 2: G) of this report.

B. Allocated Supply within the Development Plan

1.4 Allocated supply includes sites allocated within both the adopted Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and the adopted Cheltenham Plan.

Allocated Supply within the Joint Core Strategy (JCS)

1.5 Figure 2 below provides details of those sites within the Cheltenham administrative boundary allocated within the JCS.

Figure 2: Supply from JCS Allocations

Strategic JCS Allocations ²	Indicative dwellings (net) capacity	Discounting dwellings that have planning permission	Current indicative dwellings (net) capacity
A4 - North West Cheltenham	4,285	265	4,020
A7 - West Cheltenham	1,100	0	1,100
Total			5,120

Allocated Supply within the Cheltenham Plan

1.6 Figure 3 provides details of those sites allocated within the adopted Cheltenham Plan and shows the total available capacity. Please see the following webpage for more information: [Cheltenham Plan 2020](#). The figures within brackets in Figure 3 below indicate where capacity has been further analysed within the HELAA. Note that the overall potential HELAA capacity shown in brackets doubles the overall total indicative dwellings that could be provided towards meeting the housing requirement.

Figure 3: Supply from Cheltenham Plan Allocations

Reference in the Cheltenham Plan	Site	Indicative dwellings (net) capacity
HD1	Christ College Site B	70 (HELAA – 68)
HD2	Former Monkscroft Primary School	60 (HELAA – 60)
HD3	Bouncer’s Lane	20 (HELAA – 17)
HD4	Land off Oakhurst Rise	25 (HELAA – 79)

² The JCS allocations fall within both Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough administrative boundaries

HD5	Land at Stone Crescent	0 ³ (HELAA – 17)
HD6	Brockhampton Lane	0 ⁴
HD7	Priors Farm Fields	50 (HELAA – 90)
HD8	Old Gloucester Road	90 ⁵ (HELAA – 208)
HD9	North Place and Portland Street	143 (HELAA – 143)
MD4	Leckhampton	0 ⁶ (HELAA – 350)
	Total	458

1.7 The capacity from section B is the sum of the totals shown in Figures 2 and 3.

C. Deliverable Supply from Sites in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)

1.8 Submitted and officer found sites have been assessed through Cheltenham’s HELAA from December 2023. This process is periodically updated and assesses sites based on their ‘suitability’, ‘availability’ and ‘achievability’ (the latter effectively meaning they are financially viable).

1.9 Please note that a sites inclusion within the HELAA does not indicate that planning permission would be subsequently granted. The HELAA considers sites at high-level only and does not go into the level of detail that would be required to allocate a site or grant permission.⁷

1.10 To avoid double counting, HELAA sites that already have planning permission or feature within the allocated supply (both JCS and Cheltenham Plan) have been discounted in the table below.

1.11 Figure 4 details the potential deliverable sites identified through the HELAA and indicates how many dwellings they could deliver.

Figure 4: Deliverable sites in the HELAA (as at December 2023)

HELAA Site Reference	Site Name	Indicative dwellings (net) capacity	Notes
S001	North West Cheltenham (previously known as Land to the north west of Cheltenham within Cheltenham)	4,952	Already a site allocation
S023	Prior's Farm Fields	95	Already a site allocation

³ Permission for 19 dwellings included in Figure 1 under St. Mark’s.

⁴ Permission for 17 dwellings has been built out.

⁵ Permission for 85 dwellings (phase 1) has been built out.

⁶ Detailed planning permission for 350 dwellings.

⁷ The most recent version of the HELAA, including details of the methodology used, is available to view at: <https://strategiclocalplan.org/evidence-and-documents/>

S035	Land at Leckhampton, Church Road & Farm Lane	24	Site has planning permission
S064	Christ College Site B	68	Already a site allocation
S066	The Folley, Gardner's Lane	158	
S089	Rear of High Street Car Park	9	
S093	Former Monkscroft Primary	60	Already a site allocation
S094	Land at Stone Crescent	17	Already a site allocation
S109	Land at Oakley Farm	376	Site has planning permission ⁸
S110	North Place and Portland Street	143	Already a site allocation
S150	Land & buildings at Maud's Elm, 320 Swindon Road	20	Site has planning permission
S153	Douglas Equipment, Village Road	71	Site has planning permission
S154	Land at Home Farm	180	
S163	West Cheltenham	2,370	Already a site allocation
S164	Bouncer's Lane	17	Already a site allocation
S165	Lansdown Industrial Estate	139	Already a site allocation
	Total	8,699	
	Discounted site allocations	7,861	
	Discounted sites with planning permission	-491	
	Deliverable Supply from Sites in the HELAA	347	

D. Deliverable Sites on the Brownfield Land Register (BLR) (Part 1)

1.12 The BLR identifies brownfield sites (also known as 'previously developed sites') that are suitable for housing development. It is a statutory requirement for Local Planning Authorities to keep up an up-to-date register and a review is undertaken annually. Further information is available at:

[Cheltenham Brownfield Land Register](#)

1.13 Many sites on the BLR are also identified in the HELAA and there is a crossover. Figure 5 details the BLR site capacity that is not already allocated in the JCS or the Cheltenham Plan, nor featured in the HELAA. Note their listing here does not confirm they will be developed in the future.

⁸ Site has planning permission through a reserved matters application.

Figure 5: Deliverable sites on the BLR Part 1

BLR Reference	Site	Indicative dwellings (net) capacity
BFR005	96, 100, 104 Prestbury Road	15
BFR006	Land at Prestbury Road	8
BFR011	Land rear of Nuffield Hospital, Hatherley Lane	27
BFR013	Land at Whaddon Road	7
BFR025	Former Upd House Knapp Road	5
BFR026	13-14 Suffolk Street	5
BFR027	24-28 Sherborne Street	6
BFR043	Land adj 21 Sherborne Place	6
BFR046	Eagle Star Tower Podium, Montpellier Drive	7
BFR047	Eagle Star Tower Block, Montpellier Drive	144
BFR059	32 Albion Street	8
BFR060	Chapel Spa, North Place	8
	Total	246

Totals for Part 1

1.14 The total urban capacity from current sources of supply in Cheltenham Borough is highlighted in figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Total Supply from Part 1 – Current Sources

Source	Indicative dwellings (net) capacity
A. Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found. 4	1,316
B. Allocated supply within the Development Plan (Error! Reference source not found. + Cheltenham Plan 2020. The figures within brackets in Figure 3 below indicate where capacity has been further analysed within the HELAA. Note that the overall potential HELAA capacity shown in brackets doubles the overall total indicative dwellings that could be provided towards meeting the housing requirement.	5,578
C.)	
D. Deliverable HELAA sites (Error! Reference source not found.)	347
E. Error! Reference source not found.	246

Total	7,487
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2. PART 2: POTENTIAL SOURCES OF SUPPLY

2.1 Potential sources of supply in Cheltenham Borough are fairly wide ranging and they differ from the current sources of supply in that they may lack the certainty of the committed or allocated sites discussed in part 1. Figure 7 below highlights the potential sources of supply assessed.

Figure 7: Potential Sources of Supply

Potential source of supply	Information source (s)
A. Housing Strategy opportunities	Sources of supply/opportunities included within housing strategies, National council tax database
B. Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) owned sites	a. Parking studies b. Open space strategies c. Playing pitch strategies d. Allotment strategies e. Asset management strategy
C. Other publicly owned sites	Sites submitted by public bodies following targeted consultation
D. Officer and Member identified sites not identified elsewhere	Sites submitted by Members / Town Councillors following targeted consultation. Information from Cheltenham officers based on local knowledge
E. Estate Regeneration	Engagement with Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) / Local Authority leads
F. Town centre repurposing	Trend analysis through permitted development rights
G. Windfall and lapses	Housing monitoring documents
H. SLP HELAA sites	Submitted information

A. Housing Strategy Opportunities including Long Term Vacant Properties

2.2 The council's current adopted Housing Strategy is the ['Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028'](#). It has five priorities:

- i. **Increasing provision of quality, sustainable and affordable housing:** ensuring that a sufficient supply and mix of sites is provided to meet housing need; supporting the development of high quality, sustainable homes; increasing the supply of affordable housing; increasing the supply of private rented accommodation via Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH).
- ii. **Making best use of existing housing:** providing higher quality CBC owned homes that are safe and well maintained; improving standard in the private sector; making best use of underutilised/surplus land and assets; making best use of existing home and reducing the number of long-term empty homes.

- iii. **Reducing homelessness:** working across partnerships to ensure there is a coordinated approach to supporting households with complex needs; ensuring that appropriate accommodation and support services for survivors of domestic abuse; identify and responding to the housing needs of young people and helping homeless households access private rented sector.
- iv. **Tackling rough sleeping:** developing our emergency accommodation provision offer and enhancing our operational partnerships.
- v. **Investing in our communities:** creating opportunities for independent and healthy living for vulnerable residents; delivering on range of project and activity-based initiatives to further support the development of resilient and vibrant communities.

2.3 In terms of making the best use of existing stock, the report sets out that the Borough had 228 homes empty for 2 years or more at the end of March 2023. Figures submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) sets out that the Borough had approximately 590 long-term empty homes (i.e. empty for 6 months or more) as of October 2024.

2.4 Figure 8 provides the number of long term-empty homes in the Borough between 2019-24, informed annually and collated through the Government’s [Council Taxbase statistics](#).

Figure 8: Long-term empty homes 2019-2024

Year	Homes
2019	527
2020	788
2021	653
2022	607
2023	557
2024	590

2.5 Data has not been provided for total empty homes within the Borough as it is long-term vacant homes that could make the biggest difference to meeting housing needs if they could be brought back into productive use.

2.6 The council’s strategy points to the following actions that could help to make the best use of existing stock:

- i. Taking enforcement action, where necessary, to bring privately owned derelict properties back into use.
- ii. Embedding joint protocol arrangements with CBH over potential acquisition of long-term empty homes for use as affordable housing.
- iii. Acquiring long term empty homes, if necessary, by way of Compulsory Purchase Order, and converting into affordable homes.

- iv. Working with partners to bring under-utilised sites and builds such as shops, redundant offices and industrial units back into use (which could include residential use).
- 2.7 CBC has an [empty homes premium council tax charge](#) for long term unoccupied and unfurnished properties. This operates as follows:
- i. Six months after the property became unoccupied and unfurnished. Long term empty property – full charge payable
 - ii. Two years after the property became unoccupied and unfurnished. 100 % empty property premium - 200 % charge payable.
 - iii. Five years after the property became unoccupied and unfurnished. 200 % empty property premium - 300 % charge payable.
 - iv. Ten years after the property became unoccupied and unfurnished. 300 % empty property premium - 400 % charge payable.
- 2.8 Although the number of long-term empty homes has remained steady over the last years (spiking during the pandemic), from April 2025 the premium council tax charge will be applied after one year instead of two. This should put extra pressure to occupy empty homes quicker, thus hopefully lowering the overall total of empty homes.
- 2.9 The [Planning Practice Guidance \(PPG\) on housing supply and delivery](#) under the heading of ‘How should authorities count bringing empty homes back into use?’ states: *“To be included as a contribution to completions it would be for the authority to ensure that empty homes had not already been counted as part of the existing stock of dwellings to avoid double counting”* (Paragraph: 030 Reference ID: 68-030-20190722).
- 2.10 Pending this analysis and the need to avoid double counting, the UCS currently consider that there is no urban capacity potential at this point in time from bringing unoccupied and unfurnished homes back into use.

B. Cheltenham Borough Council Owned Sites

Development Potential from Car Parks

In June 2017, CBC published a [Car Parking Strategy \(2017-2031\)](#). The report examines the general strategy of the council’s car parks. Page 12 summarises the ‘Spatial Findings’. This includes finding that *“there is some capacity and car parks are rarely full”* (page 12) and *“there is neither a strong case to dramatically reduce or increase the number of car parking spaces in the town centre”* (page 12). It also indicated that *“there are few obvious opportunities for site disposal”*, whilst any potential sites *“that are disposed of should be done with outline permission and development licenses to avoid subsequent owners running them as carparks”*.

- 2.11 The report was written at a time when Chelt Walk car park was considered part of a key employment site and while North Place/Portland Street car park had been proposed to be allocated for residential uses in the Cheltenham Plan. Since then, both sites have been allocated for these uses within the Cheltenham Plan, which was adopted in 2020.

- 2.12 Similarly, car parks are a financial asset for the council, allowing the generation of additional income and helping to tackle the financial challenges as highlighted in [CBC's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 – 2028/29](#).
- 2.13 Therefore, at this stage, it appears unlikely that council car parks will be disposed of for other uses. As such, it is considered that there is no urban capacity potential to be realised from car parks at this time.

Development Potential from Public Open Space

- 2.14 The [Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Open Space Assessment Report and Strategy, produced by Knight, Kavanagh & Page](#) was published in November 2016. This report provided detail about the public space provision in the area, its condition, distribution and consultation findings. It considered a number of different types of open space comprising the following:
- i. Parks and gardens;
 - ii. Natural and semi-natural greenspace;
 - iii. Amenity greenspace;
 - iv. Provision for children and young people;
 - v. Allotments;
 - vi. Cemeteries/churchyards;
 - vii. Civic spaces; and
 - viii. Green corridors.
- 2.15 Each type of open space received separate quality and value scores. This also allowed for the *“application of a high and low quality/value matrix to further help determine prioritisation of investment and to identify sites that may be surplus within and to a particular open space typology”* (page 7).
- 2.16 In terms of quality, 76% of all sites in Cheltenham rated above the threshold with 24% rating below (page 24). In terms of value, 79% of all sites in Cheltenham rated above the threshold with 21% rating below (page 16). The report sets out that *“Lower value sites are often a result of their small size and lack of features. This makes sites less attractive to visitors, in turn decreasing their value. However, the value these provide in biodiversity and visual amenity for residents, by breaking up the urban form, can still be important and recognised”* (page 16).

Parks and Gardens

- 2.17 *“This typology covers urban park and formal gardens... which provide accessible high-quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events”* (page 19). There are 16 sites classified as parks and garden in Cheltenham Borough, the equivalent of over 68 hectares (ha), with the majority managed and maintained by the council.
- 2.18 The majority of parks and gardens (69%) score above the threshold for quality. Although 31% of parks and gardens score below the threshold, none are reported as having concerning quality issues. All park provision scores high for value; a reflection of the social interaction, health benefits and sense of place sites offer.

Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace

- 2.19 The natural and semi-natural greenspace typology can include woodland, scrub and grassland, wetlands, wastelands, bare rock habitats and commons. They are “often associated with providing wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness” (page 29). There are 7 sites (28.55 ha) located in Cheltenham Borough with one site serving both local authority areas.
- 2.20 The majority of natural and semi-natural sites in Cheltenham (71%) score below the threshold for quality. The lower scoring sites are observed as having a lack of ancillary features, but all sites promote biodiversity and a majority of the sites (71% rate above the threshold for value. The latter due this type of typology providing high ecological value through habitats.
- 2.21 Following the publication of this Assessment Report, one site (Starvehall Farm) was granted planning permission for housing and has been built out, and one site (Farmland at Priors) has been allocated in the Cheltenham Plan 2020.

Amenity Greenspace

- 2.22 *“Amenity greenspace is defined as sites offering opportunities for informal activities close to home and work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas. It includes informal recreation spaces, recreation grounds, housing green spaces, village greens and other incidental space.”* (page 37).
- 2.23 Cheltenham Borough has 121 sites (131.1 ha) defined as amenity greenspace, with a high proportion of amenity greenspace sites (72%) scoring above the quality threshold and over half (55%) of sites rating above the threshold for value. This typology also could be turned into a different form of open space provision is the site could not be improved.

Provision for Children and Young People

- 2.24 *“This includes areas designated primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters”* (page 50).
- 2.25 There are 61 play sites (4.28 ha) identified in Cheltenham. A high proportion of play provision sites (84%) rate above the quality threshold, whilst the majority of play sites (98%) in the Borough rate above the threshold for value.

Allotments

- 2.26 Allotments covers open spaces that provide opportunities for people to grow their own produce. There is a statutory duty on local authorities to provide allotments if there is a demand. There are [15 sites](#) in Cheltenham Borough.
- 2.27 An [Allotments Strategy](#) was produced by CBC in 2015. This strategy highlighted that they “score more highly for biodiversity than any other 8 publicly owned green space in the Borough” and committing

actions to “ensure provision of additional allotments in large-scale residential developments through the planning process.”

- 2.28 Figure 9 highlights more recent information published about allotment sites in the Borough, including number of plots and waiting list times.

Figure 9: Allotment Information

Site	Ward	Responsible	Plots	Waiting List Time
All Saints Church	All Saints	All Saints Church	Unknown	Unknown
Alma Road	Warden Hill	Cheltenham BC	77	Approx. 2 years
Asquith Road	College	Cheltenham BC	186	Approx. 2 – 3 years
Blacksmiths Lane	Prestbury	Cheltenham BC	145	Priority given to residents
Croft (3 sites)	Charlton Kings	Charlton Kings Parish Council	54 in total	Priority given to residents
Hall Road	Leckhampton	Bruton Knowles	80	Unknown
Hatherley Road	Park	Cheltenham BC	29	Approx. 3-4 years
Hayden Road	Springbank	Cheltenham BC	177	1.5 – 2 years
Midwinter	Pittville	Cheltenham BC	208	1.5 – 2 years
Reddings Road	Benhall & The Reddings	Cheltenham BC	38	3 years
Ryeworth	Battledown	Charlton Kings Parish Council	78	Unknown
Severn Road	Oakley	Cheltenham BC	10	2 – 3 years
Stanton Drive/Church Rd	Swindon Village	Swindon Village Parish Council	32	Priority given to residents
Terry Ashdown	Springbank	Cheltenham BC	43	2 – 3 years
Warden Hill	Warden Hill	Cheltenham BC	35	2 - 3 years

- 2.29 Current provision for Cheltenham just meets the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardens (NSALG) recommended amount of 29.12 ha (10 plots per 1000 people). Given the population in the Borough has increased following the 2021 census⁹, it is likely this recommended amount will have increased.
- 2.30 There are currently waiting lists for allotments within the Borough suggesting that demand for allotments is not currently being met by supply. All allotment provision scores above the quality threshold and all sites were assessed as high value reflecting the associate social inclusion and health benefits, as well as amenity value. Concurrently, the Assessment Report recommends that measures should be explored to provide additional plots in the future. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no urban capacity potential from allotments at this time.

Churchyards/Cemeteries

⁹ [National population projections - Office for National Statistics](#)

- 2.31 There are 20 sites (29.94 ha) classified as churchyards and cemeteries in Cheltenham. The largest contributor to burial provision is Bouncer's Lane cemetery totalling at 19.83 ha and makes up 78% of burial provision in the Borough.
- 2.32 All churchyard and cemetery provision in Cheltenham rates above the threshold set for quality, whilst all are assessed as high value reflecting the role they have within communities as well as their cultural and heritage value.
- 2.33 Churchyards and cemeteries will continue to be protected and as such there is no urban capacity potential from this source.

Civic Space

- 2.34 This open space typology includes civic and market squares and other hard surfaced areas designed for pedestrians.
- 2.35 Cheltenham has 3 sites (1.41 ha) that can be classified as civic spaces but there are likely to be other informal pedestrian areas that local residents may view as providing similar roles and functions.
- 2.36 There are 2 sites that rate above the threshold for quality, with 1 site that rates marginally below (Coronation Square shopping centre) the threshold. It should be noted that this site is now an allocated site with the Cheltenham Plan for a mixed-use development. All civic spaces in Cheltenham are assessed as high value, reflective of their social and cultural/heritage role and sense of place to the local community provision provides. It can therefore be concluded that there is no urban capacity potential from this source.

Green Corridors

- 2.37 *"The green corridor typology of open space includes sites that offer opportunities for walking, cycling or horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel. Such sites also provide opportunities for wildlife migration. This may include river and canal banks, road and rail corridors, cycling routes, pedestrian paths, rights of way and permissive paths"* (page 81).
- 2.38 There are 7 green corridors identified in Cheltenham equating to 11.38 ha. Most of the sites score above the quality threshold (57%). Those that score below do so only by a small margin. All except one of the sites scores high for value, which is a reflection on this typology's health benefits and sense of place.
- 2.39 The Open Space assessment and strategy did not make specific recommendations about disposal of any site. As such, it is considered that there is no urban capacity potential to be realised from Green Corridors at this time.

Development Potential from Playing Pitches

- 2.40 [The Playing Pitch Strategy \(PPS\) and Action Plan](#) was produced on behalf of CBC by FMG Consulting and published in July 2024. This report *"provides evidence on the supply and demand for sports pitches within the Borough, to ensure that suitable provision is made for both the existing population and any future demand up to 2041"*. The information produced was aligned with Sport England's Planning Pitch Strategy guidance.

- 2.41 The strategy covers the following outdoor sports; football, rugby union, rugby league, lacrosse, hockey, cricket, and other sports (American football). Artificial Grass Pitches (AGP) related to these sports identified have also been captured.
- 2.42 Under Section 2 of the PPS Action Plan the existing position for football grass pitches (except for 11v11 youth football and mini soccer), hockey AGPs, rugby league pitches, lacrosse and American football fields is either that the demand is being met or there is some degree of spare capacity. However, the PPS Action Plan sets concludes that there is shortfall of 3G AGPs, rugby union match equivalent sessions (MES), and cricket MES.
- 2.43 At paragraph 3.6, the PPS Action Plan refers to 3 disused sites in Cheltenham which equates to 8 pitches (7 for football and 1 for cricket). Paragraphs 3.7 and 3.8 identify that there are 5 sites as providing unmarked pitches (sites previously providing playing pitches but no longer do) which equates to a total of 11 pitches.
- 2.44 The PPS Action Plan concludes that disused sites and unmarked pitches should not be deemed surplus to requirements given the shortfall of provision for many sports. It was highlighted that opportunities to bring them back into an alternative pitch use should be explored further. This being the case, at this time there is no urban capacity potential for housing sites to come forward from this source.

Development Potential from Council Assets

- 2.45 [The Cheltenham Borough Council Asset Management Strategy 2022/23 to 2026/27](#) forms “*part of a suite of documents that comprise the council’s investment and expenditure strategies, and governance and decision-making arrangements*” (page 3). The council have developed an asset challenge process, which is “*divided into two phases; an annual review of the purpose and performance of an asset and then the process for evaluating any decisions relating to an asset*”.
- 2.46 Stage one - ‘Strategic Fit and Purpose’ and stage two - ‘Performance’ of the asset challenge process should be undertaken annually. The strategy states that the purpose of assessing the strategic fit and performance of an asset is to determine whether there is an opportunity to change how the asset is used by the council. The strategy states that “*Stage three to six of the process should be undertaken when, following assessment of strategic purpose and performance, assets in a category are no longer providing a benefit for the council*” (page 12). Appendix 1 to the Asset Management Strategy contains an ‘Asset Challenge Process Map’. In terms of ‘Stage 6 - Asset Challenge Outcome (page 15), this refers to:
- i. Retain Asset;
 - ii. Redevelop Asset;
 - iii. Dispose of Asset;
 - iv. Acquire Asset.
- 2.47 It is also noted that once the different categories of assets (Investment; Operational; Community and Other) are completed that “*a performance dashboard and asset action plan will be produced...*” (page 13).

2.48 The Property & Asset Management team and CBH were consulted during the 2023 'Call for Sites' as part of the SLP process. No sites were submitted for potential dwellings beyond any sites that had already been submitted for consideration within the HELAA.

2.49 Therefore, at this stage and pending the periodic analysis of any asset action plans, as such it is assumed for the purposes of this UCS that there is currently no urban capacity potential to be realised from council assets. However, they may present a windfall opportunity in the future.

C. Other Publicly Owned Sites

2.50 Through both the SLP Regulation 18 consultation¹⁰ and direct contact via the UCS study, CBC consulted public bodies including the NHS, police, County Council and Network Rail. This sparked discussions and highlighted awareness to the public bodies to better understand the SLP process and how their assets could feed in. When these organisations periodically undertake their own asset management reviews, they will now endeavour to contact the SLP to enable consideration for housing if they wish to repurpose or dispose of any of their assets in the future. At this present time it is considered, for the purposes of the UCS that there is no urban capacity potential to be realised from other publicly owned sites.

D. Other Officer and Member identified sites

2.51 Appropriate council officers and all elected Members in the Borough were consulted through the SLP Regulation 18 consultation which included a 'Call for Sites' providing the opportunity to suggest sites for consideration. No formal responses were received through this process. However, the SLP team also provided another direct opportunity through a more targeted approach. Presentations were given to Cheltenham's Planning and Liaison Member Working Group (PLMWG) and the Joint Planning Policy Reference Panel/Working Group (Joint MWG/PPRP) comprising Members from all 3 LPAs. Information was subsequently emailed to each Member and all relevant Town and Parish Councils in built up areas across the SLP area, giving them the opportunity to submit a site for further analysis through an interactive form. In addition, the Planning Policy Team are regularly involved in discussions with other officer groups where potential site opportunities are discussed.

2.52 Figure 10 highlights sites that have been identified through these means that have not been identified elsewhere (i.e. in the HELAA or BLR).

Figure 10: Other Potential Sites

Site	Details	Indicative dwellings (net) capacity
Cavendish House, 32-48 The Promenade	The site is a former department store established in the early 1800s and as of April 2024 was recently occupied by House of Fraser. It is a 4-storey building that fronts onto The Promenade, a primary shopping frontage within a core commercial area, and has access to its rear	Approximately 62 @ 120dph

¹⁰<https://strategiclocalplan.org/consultations/>

	<p>onto Regent Street. As of June 2024, the site has re-opened as an Independent Pop-up market and food hall on a year long contract. The site owners, Canada Life Asset Management, are exploring options to redevelop the building into a mixed-use which could include substantial town centre housing. There is no indication of when the site could be available, but a conservative estimate of capacity is provided for the purpose of the UCS.</p>	
<p>Land at Hardwick Campus, St Pauls Road</p>	<p>The site is the University of Gloucester (UoG) Hardwick Campus, a 1.9-hectare complex with several buildings and public green space previously used as sport pitches. UoG have decided to sell the site and have placed it on the market. Based on pre-application information that has been made publicly available, there is a potential redevelopment of the site for 69 residential units, including a mix of houses and flats, as well as green infrastructure. At the time of writing there is no firm indication that this will be available for residential use in the near future as the site is for sale on an open market, but it is important for the council to be aware of its potential and to monitor events.</p>	<p>69</p>
<p>Battledown Industrial Estate</p>	<p>Battledown Industrial Estate is surrounded by residential areas and QE2 park. Some of the site is used by well-established businesses such as County Plumbing, Howdens Kitchens and La Boulangerie bakery that residents may not wish to lose. However, there appear to be some buildings on the north side that are empty or underused that may represent a redevelopment opportunity without impacting the existing businesses. Further assessment is required to determine land ownership, compatibility and appetite for redevelopment. However, a conservative capacity estimate is provided for the purpose of the UCS.</p>	<p>Approximately 45 @ 60dph</p>
<p>TOTAL</p>		<p>Approximately 176</p>

E. Estate regeneration

- 2.53 CBH is now¹¹ part of Cheltenham Borough Council. CBC is responsible for the management and maintenance of the council's housing stock and housing and homeless service. They have been working with communities across Cheltenham to regenerate neighbourhoods and build new homes in places where people want to live now and in the future.
- 2.54 Apart from sites already featured in the HELAA, it has been confirmed that there are no potential sites for development and thus there is no urban capacity potential from this source of information at this time.

E. Town Centre repurposing / redevelopment existing sites / residential above shops

- 2.55 Changes in retail demand and the way people access towns centres is continually evolving. CBC have recognised that it is important for the town to adapt to these changes to ensure the viability and vitality of the town centre into the future.
- 2.56 A [Vacant Units and Town Centre: Land Use Efficiency Action Plan](#) was produced by CBC and the Cheltenham Business Improvement District (BID) in 2023 with an [Updated Vacant Units Report](#) produced in February 2025. One of the objectives is the encouragement for future strategic planning to bring more residential accommodation to the town centre. This UCS has therefore assessed whether there is the potential to redevelop parts of the town centre and repurpose existing commercial units into housing.
- 2.57 Data shows that Cheltenham has a lower town centre retail unit's vacancy rate (8%) compared to England (14%) suggesting there is no overall demand nor capacity for housing from this source of information. However, some streets have significantly higher vacancies - such as Ormond Place (33%) and Henrietta Street (50%). In this sense, higher vacancies may suggest a redevelopment potential for retail into residential. Whilst the council are undertaking some work on this, they are yet to have any direct control over this market-led behaviour.
- 2.58 Although CBC are aware of the Borough's need for one-bedroom dwellings in sustainable locations such as the town centre, there are often difficulties in addressing amenity / environmental issues to bring these forward in practice. Therefore, CBC are taking a conservative approach regarding this opportunity at this present time. However, CBC are currently reviewing the challenges and opportunities relating to the provision of residential above shops that will help inform a long-term policy response to take forward into the SLP to support and facilitate such redevelopment in the future.
- 2.59 Given the above it is considered that there is no urban capacity potential from town centre retail units at this time.

¹¹ From 1 July 2024, the management and maintenance of CBC's housing stock and housing and homeless service returned to Cheltenham Borough Council (as set out at <https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/a-to-z/service/180/cheltenham-borough-homes> accessed on 14 April 2025)

F. Windfall Allowance

- 2.60 In this report the council has also considered an allowance for small windfall sites. Windfall sites are “sites not specifically identified in the development plan” (Glossary to the [National Planning Policy Framework](#)). This is based on an analysis of historic windfall delivery since 2017/18. Figure 11 shows that over that period, there was a total windfall delivery of 375 dwellings (net), which equates to an average of 54¹² net dwellings (53.6 rounded up) per year. This is the windfall allowance for the 5-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) calculation for 2023/24, but it will change every year because a new average will be taken.
- 2.61 It is assumed that small sites with planning permission will be delivered within two years. In the 5YHLS calculation the council have adopted a conservative approach and therefore windfall does not contribute until years three to five. This approach to windfall was established through the JCS examination.

Figure 11: Net dwellings completed on sites delivering 4 or fewer units since the plan period began

2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Total
47	56	65	74	35	48	50	375

G. Regulation 18 Sites

- 2.62 A formal call for sites was undertaken during the Regulation 18 consultation process to allow interested parties to submit a site for consideration and assessment to help meet the housing need. A wide range of stakeholders were contacted during this process.
- 2.63 Through this process, 8 sites for residential development were submitted in Cheltenham Borough as detailed in figure 12 below.

Figure 12: Sites submitted at Regulation 18 Stage

Figure 12: Sites submitted at Regulation 18 stage					
Site	Ward	Gross site area (net site area) ha / % discounted site area	Details	Notes	Indicative dwellings (net) capacity
Land at Corithian Park, Grovefield Way	Benhall, The Reddings & Fiddlers Green Ward	2.23 (1.40) / 37%	Residential	Resolution to permit 60 units	60
Maenans Stud,	Swindon Village ward	2.73 (1.71) / 37%	Residential	Overlapping another HELAA site	40dph – 68

¹² / Divided by 12

Brockhampton Lane					
Land east of Kidnappers Lane	Leckhampton ward	1.61 (1.33) / 17%	Residential	New Site	40dph - 63
Land at Brailsford House (Parker Court)	Lansdown ward	0.01 (0.001) / 10%	Residential	New site (8 units suggested)	60dph – 8
Land to the east of Farm Lane, Leckhampton	Leckhampton ward	0.6 (0.49) / 17%	Residential	New site	40dph - 20
Parsons Piece, Swindon Village	Swindon Village ward	6.3 (3.96) / 37%	Residential	Overlapping another HELAA site	40dph – 158
The Briars (formerly known as Flowerdale Farm)	Benhall, The Reddings & Fiddlers Green Ward	1.45 (1.20) / 17%	Unknown	New site	40dph – 48
TOTAL					425
DISCOUNTED SITES					226
POTENTIAL SUPPLY					199

Totals for Part 2

2.64 The total urban capacity from potential sources of supply in Cheltenham Borough is highlighted in figure 13 below.

Figure 13: Total Supply from Part 2 – Potential Sources

Figure 13: Totals for Part 2 potential sources of supply	
Supply element	Indicative dwellings (net capacity)
A. Housing Strategy opportunities including long term vacant properties	No urban capacity potential
B. CBC owned sites	No urban capacity potential
C. Other publicly owned sites	No sites submitted
D. Other officer and member identified sites	176
E. Estate regeneration	No urban capacity potential

F. Town centre repurposing	No urban capacity potential
G. Windfall	375 (54 per year)
H. SLP Regulation 18 Sites	199
TOTAL	750

3. CAPACITY AND DENSITY

3.1 Apart from identifying more sites and opportunities from all areas of Cheltenham, clearly another way in which urban capacity could be increased is through increasing densities on windfall development as well as on allocated sites. This is an approach that the NPPF encourages in paragraphs 129 and 130 to provide minimum density standards for different areas.

3.2 Urban density is a measure of intensity of development within a given area, and due to the residential focus of this study it will be expressed in dwellings per hectare (dph), the higher the number, the higher the density.

Local density policies and guidance

3.3 Following the ‘brownfield first’ principle, the 2020 Cheltenham Plan refers to the 2017 Joint Core Strategy for density policies, which is derived from Strategic Objective 6 – ‘Meeting the challenges of climate change’. This objective calls to: *“make the fullest contribution possible to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change and the transition to a low-carbon economy, by making the best use of land, by maximising the use of previously-developed land and encouraging higher-density developments in central locations, whilst promoting food security by protecting the highest-grade agricultural land and allotments”* (JCS, p14).

3.4 Specifically, policy SD4: ‘Design Requirements’ states that developments: *“(…) should be of a scale, type, density and materials appropriate to the site and its setting.”* (p.41). Further explanation is provided for layout considering assessing sites based on *“the urban grain (the pattern and density of routes, street blocks, plots, spaces and buildings of a locality) and topography of an area”* (p45)

3.5 Similarly, policy SD10: ‘Residential Developments’ states that: *“residential development should seek to achieve the maximum density compatible with good design, the protection of heritage assets, local amenity, the character and quality of the local environment, and the safety and convenience of the local and strategic road network”.*’ (p. 61) and paragraph 4.10.6 provides further explanation stating that: *“careful and innovative design is the key to achieving the highest appropriate density in a particular location. A proposal which would harm the character of a neighbourhood or site through excessive density, poor design or inadequate open space will not be acceptable”* (p62)

3.6 [Golden Valley Supplementary Planning Document](#) (p52-55) for the allocated strategic site in west Cheltenham uses a range of 20 to 80dph, classifying densities of 35 - 60dph as ‘mid’ and 60 - 80+dph as ‘high’ density. Moreover, it uses three existing Cheltenham-based examples for built out high density developments: Royal Crescent (125dph), Victoria Place (74dph), and Albert Street (99dph) (left to right images below).

Figure 14: Royal Crescent, Victoria Place and Albert Street (Left to Right)



- 3.7 More recently, an approved town-centre residential planning application at the former brownfield car park at North Place (24/00236/FUL) is expected to provide a density of 106dph.
- 3.8 Appendix 1 also sets out a summary from planning applications that represent high density schemes approved and constructed in the Borough's principal urban area (PUA).

Site Assessments

- 3.9 In assessing sites, Cheltenham, along with Gloucester and Tewkesbury, will use the joint HELAA methodology which is based on the standard methodology set out in the PPG. This methodology has been updated to take into account a detailed internal work stream undertaken on densities across the SLP area and changes in legislation.

Estimating development potential

- 3.10 The PPG advises that development potential of sites should be guided by the existing or emerging planning policy, including locally determined policies on density.
- 3.11 The assessment of development potential through the HELAA methodology is based on a number of factors and the development potential within the HELAA does not in itself determine that it is suitable for development or that it should be allocated for development. The potential is indicative only and does not prejudice assessments made through the development plan or planning application process.
- 3.12 Site capacities are assessed based on evidence from promoters of sites, urban design principles and other local information. Where evidence is unavailable, individual density assumptions have been applied to each local authority. The density categories align with the [National Model Design Code \(p. 14\)](#) (NMDC) (2021), which include 'Urban Neighbourhoods' 60 - 120 dph, and 'Suburbs' 40 - 60 dph. It is intended they are developed in more detail when the Design Code for the SLP areas is published (scheduled for 2026).
- 3.13 For Cheltenham Borough the following densities are deemed appropriate to apply in assessing capacity:

- i. 60 - 120 dph for sites within the main built-up area (examples include, Pittville, Lansdown, St Pauls, Fairview, St Peters, All Saints) and
- ii. 40 - 60 dph for areas outside of this (examples include, Hatherley, Leckhampton & Warden Hill, Benhall, Charlton Kings, Hesters Way, Oakley).

3.14 For the HELAA calculations the lower end of the density range is used (e.g. 60 for the main built-up area) as a cautious approach. However, applications at the higher range of the density are encouraged in the appropriate site context (e.g. sites close to public transport links).

3.19 To account for a proportion of the site that will be taken up by infrastructure and landscaping, a density multiplier is applied to achieve a net developable area based on the following assumptions set out in figure 15 below.

Figure 15: Density Multiplier Assumptions

Site Size (ha)	Discounted site area	Area for housing
0 - 0.4	10%	90%
0.4 - 2	17%	83%
2+	37%	63%

4. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

4.1 This study has considered urban capacity in the Borough of Cheltenham taking into account both current and potential supply. The UCS will be kept under review to ensure that the most up to date urban capacity is factored into the plan making process. Figure 16 below highlights total capacity from both current and potential sources and provides the overall urban capacity figure for Cheltenham Borough at this time.

Figure 16: Total Urban Capacity within Cheltenham Borough

Site Source	Indicative dwellings (net capacity)
Current Supply	7,487
Potential Supply	750
Total Urban Capacity	8,237

4.3 The current housing requirement (as of March 2025) is 817 dwellings per annum (or 16,340 dwellings over a 20 year time frame) using the Standard Method in the NPPF. Even after applying the appropriate higher density multipliers, it is clear that Cheltenham cannot meet its housing demand by solely relying on urban land within its administrative boundary. The urban capacity identified within Cheltenham Borough would only meet around half of their overall requirement (or 412 dwellings per annum) even if all current and potential sites were to come forward over a 20 year time frame.

4.4 Therefore, to meet Cheltenham’s requirements in full, further evidence is required in terms of a

Green Belt Study, to understand if there are any parcels of land that could be released for development, particularly taking into consideration any 'Grey Belt' land deemed suitable to help meet the need across the SLP area. In addition, effective joint working on the SLP will need to continue under the duty to cooperate and the appropriate development strategy determined, taking into account the baseline capacity of the Cheltenham (and Gloucester and Tewkesbury) administrative boundaries, the overall conclusions set out in the joint UCS report and other pertinent evidence based workstreams.

APPENDIX 1: DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDIES

Ref.	Site Name	Development	Units	Density	Details
03/01624/FUL	St James Walk, Honeybourne Way	 	142	450dph	<p>Site area: 0.35 hectares</p> <p>Edge of town centre location</p> <p>Previously located on former St James train station</p> <p>A 6-storey block of 142 apartments</p> <p>104 one-bed apartments and 38 two-bed apartments with car parking for 101 spaces in the basement.</p>
05/00967/FUL	Grosvenor House, Evesham Road	 	24	150dph	<p>Site area: 0.177 hectares</p> <p>Edge of town centre in Pittville .</p> <p>Previously developed land of three houses</p> <p>A 4-storey block with basement of 24 apartments</p> <p>A mixture of one and two bed apartments with rear car parking</p>

Ref.	Site Name	Development	Units	Density	Details
08/00903/FUL	84 Gloucester Road		14	240dph	<p>Site area: 0.06 hectares</p> <p>Edge of town centre location</p> <p>Previously on site of a former public house</p> <p>A 4-storey block of 14 apartments located on former public house site</p> <p>Mixture of one and two bed apartments with associated parking to the rear.</p>
11/00094/FUL	401 High Street		12	444dph	<p>Site area: 0.03 hectares</p> <p>Town centre location</p> <p>Previously a former commercial unit</p> <p>A 4-storey block of 12 apartments located on a machine hire unit. Sites was previously single storey</p> <p>Mixture of 1 and 2 bed apartments with. Mixed used development with retail unit located on High Street.</p>

Ref.	Site Name	Development	Units	Density	Details
13/00827/OUT, 13/00777/FUL	Regency Place, Winchcombe St		95	144dph	<p>Site area: 0.79 hectares</p> <p>Town centre location</p> <p>Previously in use as Odeon cinema and Vauxhall Baylis site</p> <p>Mixture of 3-5 storey block of 56 apartments and 39 townhouses</p> <p>12 retail units on the corner of Winchcombe St and Albion Place</p>
15/00362/FUL	John Dower House, 24 Crescent Place		68	210dph	<p>Site area: 0.36 hectares</p> <p>Town centre location</p> <p>Previously disused car parks, adjacent to John Dower House and St Matthews Church, Grade II listed buildings</p> <p>Mixture of 3-5 storey blocks of 68 later living apartments including 20 one-bed, 40 two-bed and 8 three-bed apartments</p>

Ref.	Site Name	Development	Units	Density	Details
17/02411/FUL	379 - 383 High Street		43	265dph	<p>Site area: 0.18 hectares</p> <p>Town centre location</p> <p>Previously a bingo hall and car show room</p> <p>4 storey block of 37 apartments and 6 maisonettes to rear with associated parking</p> <p>Mixture of 27 one-bed and 16 two-bed apartments</p>
17/01311/FUL	Rivershill House, St Georges Road		63	185dph	<p>Site area: 0.41 hectares</p> <p>Edge of town centre location</p> <p>Previously an office block, partial demolition and addition of new floor to convert into housing</p> <p>5 storey block of 63 apartments with associated parking</p> <p>Mix of 41 two-bed, 18 one-bed and 4 three-bed apartments</p>