

South Gloucestershire Council Local Plan 2020

Tormarton Parish Council's Response to Phase 1 Consultation

1. Introduction

Tormarton Parish Council represents the small Cotswold villages of Tormarton and West Littleton in South Gloucestershire. Tormarton is the larger of the two villages and is located just north of Junction 18 of the M4 motorway and 4½ miles south east of Chipping Sodbury. The smaller village West Littleton is situated 2 miles south of Tormarton just east of the A46 towards Bath and two miles north of the larger village of Marshfield.

Tormarton has a population of around 270 across 110 households, whilst West Littleton has 60 residents across 26 households.

Both villages sit in a rural setting (not in the Green Belt) within the Cotswold AONB and are designated Conservation areas. There are extremely limited industrial or manufacturing sites within the Parish, with agriculture and associated services forming the main economy, alongside homeworking service-related businesses.

In terms of travel and transport, there is an infrequent bus service in Tormarton which links the village to Chipping Sodbury and Acton Turville, but this fails the minimum criteria for SGC's Data and Access Profile. There is no transport service through West Littleton. There are no designated cycling or safe walking routes from either village linking to nearby villages.

For both villages, the nearest primary school and doctors' surgery are over 2 miles away. Tormarton, however, does boast two public houses and a community village hall.

2. Revisions to Data and Access Profiles: Tormarton and West Littleton

We have reviewed the Profiles, with revision as follows:

Tormarton:

- The village has 2 public houses within the catchment and not 1 as quoted: The Majors Retreat, High Street and The Compass Inn, Acton Turville Road
- There is no Comparison Retail Store in the catchment.
- The population numbers quoted in the DAPs relates to numbers in the settlement boundary as opposed to the total village boundary. The village has approx. 270 residents and 110 households.

West Littleton

- There are currently 11 children between the ages of 5 – 12 and 1 child between the ages of 0 – 4
- The GP Surgery, Comparison Retail Store, Primary School and Community Centre are all over 2 miles away and not as quoted.

We think it is worth pointing out that a 2 mile radius within a village environment is very different to that of an urban area. With good access to safe cycling routes, a 2 mile travelling distance could take little more than 10 minutes whereas it would take very much longer in a town centre environment.

3. The Consultation

At this initial stage, we are being asked to comment on the Issues and Priorities SGC has identified as key in developing its Local Plan.

These are as follows:

Issues	Priorities
Climate Change	Pursue a carbon neutral and resilient future in a changing climate
Our Environment	Protect and enhance our environment
Health and Wellbeing	Development that promotes health and wellbeing
Exceptional Spaces and Places	Creating exceptional spaces and places
Planning for Urban and Rural Growth	Planning for urban and rural growth
Planning for New Homes	Provide the right type and number of new homes
Our Economy	Enable a productive, clean and inclusive economy
Travel and Transport	Achieving sustainable travel and transport
Supporting Infrastructure	Ensuring the time and efficient provision of infrastructure to support growing communities

4. Tormarton Parish Council – General Comments

- We support and agree the Issues and Approaches identified
- Phase 1 of the Local Plan provides a well-balanced overview of issues and arguments – both urban and rural
- We have reservations regarding the DAP data in terms of Tormarton and its settlement boundary and note that many residents in other rural settlements share our view regarding accuracy

- At a recent Local Plan consultation meeting, SGC Planning were unable to give any guidance as to the percentage increase required in housing growth. Without some idea of parameters, it is very difficult to establish relevance for growth in our Parish
- There is no indication of SGC future funding or financial forecasts put forward. What budget will be available for sustainable transport/local amenities, etc. How can priorities/decisions be made without funding forecasts?

5. Tormarton Parish Council – Creating Sustainable Rural Villages and Settlements

We have focussed our response on the section of the Consultation that is most relevant to the two villages of Tormarton and West Littleton – Creating Sustainable Rural Villages and Settlements – and comments are as follows:

5.1 Growth

Firstly, we support your proposed approach to investigate an appropriate level of growth within our rural villages and settlements.

We understand and support the importance of creating sustainable villages. We want our villages to thrive and be enjoyed by a wide-range of residents – existing local families, those relocating from other parts of the UK, youngsters, adults, senior citizens – all coming together to form a supportive and positive community.

Both villages are in easy commutable distances to both large cities like Bristol and Bath and to the small/medium sized towns like Yate and Chipping Sodbury.

In terms of growth and development, we support SGC's recommendation that this should be strategically planned rather than speculative and that targeted rural villages could be identified for small and medium development, ie. 5 houses plus. However, with limited amenities, it is difficult to imagine anything but minimal growth in our two villages.

The consultation states that future planning for growth will be done 'working with our communities' and we feel this is essential to ensure any growth is viewed positively within our communities, is sympathetic and is appropriate. We would like to know how SGC propose to involve our communities in these decisions going forward.

Neither Tormarton or West Littleton meet the minimum criteria for transport links as confirmed in the Data and Access Profiles. West Littleton is totally reliant on car transport to reach any amenities which are 2 miles away, and Tormarton similarly suffers with poor access to amenities (although there is a very limited bus services from Tormarton). There are no designated walking or cycling routes from the villages to neighbouring villages/towns, although such routes would be supported by

the Parish Council. Similarly, a greatly improved public transport service would provide improved access to our more urban areas and reduce reliance on less sustainable methods of transport.

5.2 Environment

The villages sit in a rural community where farming and associated agricultural services form the main economy.

Both our villages sit within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and are designated Conservation areas. West Littleton is also designated a Site of National Conservation Interest. Our villages are enjoyed by thousands of visitors every year, many of whom are walking the Cotswold Way which runs through or close to the two villages and provide an accessible rural ideal that is so important for health and wellbeing. This has been emphasized even more during the current Covid restrictions, where we have noticed numbers of visitors have increased dramatically.

There are currently 2 sites of designated Green Spaces in Tormarton with 5 more sites nominated in the Policies, Sites and Places Plan adopted in November 2017. The Common in West Littleton is also a nominated site. To protect and enhance our environment, we urge SGC to recognise and nominate these remaining Green Spaces in the Local Plan.

5.3 Travel and Transport

This has been covered under 'Growth' above. There are currently extremely limited sustainable transport options in our two villages. A series of safe cycling routes for children travelling to schools in Acton Turville and Marshfield would be welcomed. Similarly, a review of bus services through the villages.

It is worth noting that a number of residents within Tormarton take advantage of the Green Community Transport initiative.

Adequate road maintenance is essential, particularly through the winter months.

5.4 Infrastructure

Tormarton and West Littleton have in recent years been connected to fast fibre broadband which has made a significant improvement to communications generally and, in particular, for home-working and schooling. It is essential that these technology updates continue to ensure our communities can compete with more urban areas.

Tormarton and West Littleton children are served by Acton Turville and Marshfield Primary Schools – both schools are just over 2 miles away from the villages, but with no public transport to service them. As both schools are just over 2 miles away from our villages, there is no automatic link to either school which means our children are

just allocated spaces based on availability and children within the same family have been known to be split between different schools.

There is no mains gas connected to either village, so residents are dependent on oil, lpg or electricity. Similarly, there is no mains sewage connection in West Littleton.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to respond to Phase 1.