

UPDATE ON STRATEGIC PLANNING IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Meeting	GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH JOINT COMMITTEE (GEGJC)
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Background documents	N/A
Location/Contact for inspection of background documents	N/A
Main Consultees	N/A
Planned Dates	N/A
Purpose of report	Status of Strategic Planning in Gloucestershire This report provides an update on the status of the strategic plans that have been progressed by the Gloucestershire authorities and the levels of growth that have been identified and is being planned for within them.
Recommendations	1. To NOTE the update on the progress on strategic plan making by the Gloucestershire authorities, the amount of growth being planned for, and key delivery projects.
Reason for recommendations	To ensure that the committee is aware of the status of strategic planning across the county.
Resource Implications	N/A

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Each of the Gloucestershire authorities have made significant progress with their strategic planning documents with the JCS authorities, Cotswold, Stroud, and Forest of Dean having adopted plans in place. These plans set out the housing and employment growth requirements for their respective areas as well as identifying major development projects that will help to deliver it. Furthermore, authorities are now already working on reviews of their plans as well as progressing their second tier local plans and supplementary planning documents. This paper provides an update on these plans and some of the key projects.
- 1.2 The report below sets out the individual growth needs for each plan area. In total the strategic plans in Gloucestershire identify the need for a total of 61,500 new homes and 342ha of employment land in the plan period to 2031.

2. Stroud District Local Plan

2.1 The Stroud District Local Plan was adopted in November 2015 and covers the period from 2006 to 2031. The plan identifies the following growth requirements:

- Housing: 11,400
- Employment land: 58ha
- Jobs: up to 12,500

2.2 To deliver the growth required, the local plan identifies several strategic sites that will meet a significant proportion of the housing requirement. These sites are as follows:

Site	Homes	Employment land (ha)
Hunts Grove Extension	750	
Quedgeley East		13
North East Cam	450	12
Sharpness	300	17
Stroud Valleys	450	
West of Stonehouse	1,350	10

2.3 Housing delivery has been strong within Stroud and as of 31st March 2020 there had already been 6,346 dwellings completed and a further 5,215 had received planning permission. The council can currently demonstrate an 8.95 years supply of housing land. As at 31st March 2020 employment land completions totalled 32 hectares with 51 hectares having received permission.

2.4 The council has been progressing a review of the Local Plan since 2017. The reviewed plan will cover the period from 2020-2040. Public consultation on the Draft Local Plan closed in January 2020. The growth strategy envisages delivering 12,800 new homes at a series of strategic locations including two new settlements. Adoption of the new plan is anticipated in 2022.

3. Joint Core Strategy

3.1 The Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (JCS) was adopted in December 2017 and covers the period between 2011 and 2031. The plan identifies the following growth requirements:

- Homes: 35,175
- Employment land: 192ha
- Jobs: 39,500

3.2 To deliver this growth the JCS identifies several large strategic allocations as urban extensions to Gloucester and Cheltenham that will make a significant contribution to delivering both housing and employment growth. These are as follows:

Site	Homes	Employment land (ha)
Innsworth & Twigworth	2,295	9.1
South Churchdown	1,100	17.4
North Brockworth	1,500	3
North West Cheltenham	4,285	23.4

West Cheltenham	1,100	45
Ashchurch		14.3
Winneycroft	620	

- 3.3 In addition to these allocations there had been joint working with Wychavon District Council on a site at Mitton, within Wychavon but on the edge of Tewkesbury town, contributing towards Tewkesbury's housing needs. This site is currently subject to an outline planning application for 500 dwellings which is yet to be resolved.
- 3.4 The sites at Innsworth & Twigworth, South Churchdown, North Brockworth, Ashchurch and Winneycroft are already subject to outline planning consents which cover a significant part, if not the entire, site. Reserved Matters approval has been granted for development parcels on Innsworth and North Brockworth and the delivery of homes on site began within 2019/20.
- 3.5 The site at North West Cheltenham is currently subject of live planning applications and West Cheltenham is undergoing detailed pre-application discussions. None of the strategic allocations have yet started to deliver and the next key phase of the JCS is to work with developers and infrastructure providers to deliver these sites. However, the Golden Valley Supplementary Planning Document was adopted by both Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough Councils in July 2020 which will help guide the development of the West Cheltenham site.
- 3.6 Delivery in the JCS are has been strong and as of 31st March 2019 total completions over the JCS plan period to date have totalled 12,215 dwellings. In addition, there are future commitments from sites with planning permission and allocated sites that are to provide a further 13,317 dwellings. The adoption of the emerging Tewkesbury Borough Plan and Gloucester City Plan will add further to the housing supply of the area.
- 3.7 The JCS commits to an immediate review on housing supply for Tewkesbury Borough and Gloucester as well as a retail/town centre review for the whole area. With regards to new homes, the JCS identifies a housing shortfall of around 2,400 homes for Tewkesbury Borough and around 1,000 homes for Gloucester at the time of adoption. In regards to retail, an immediate review is required to update an assessment of retails needs and to explore the allocation of strategic retail sites in accordance with a retail/town centre strategy. However, due to new requirements set out in the revised National Planning Policy Framework and to address wider delivery issues with the existing JCS, it is considered that this review will need be extended to be a comprehensive review of the plan.
- 3.8 To start this process the JCS Review Issues & Options consultation took place from November 2018 to January 2019. This consultation asked questions around all aspects of the review, including the extent of its scope and plan period to be addressed. The authorities are now in the process of gathering the evidence required to inform the development of a draft JCS that will be subject to public consultation in Summer 2021.
- 3.9 Outside of the strategic allocations, each of the JCS authorities also has an identified district capacity which is to be met by smaller-scale allocations made through district-level plans that will sit underneath the JCS. These plans are now at an advanced stage, with the Cheltenham Plan already being adopted in August 2020, while the Tewkesbury Borough Plan was submitted for examination in May 2020 and the Gloucester City Plan submit is to be submitted in Winter 2020.

4. Forest of Dean Core Strategy & Allocations Plan

4.1 The Forest of Dean Core Strategy was adopted on 2012 and covers the period from 2006 to 2026. An Allocations plan which incorporates a full review of housing requirements and makes allocations accordingly was adopted in 2018. The following growth requirements are identified:

- Housing: 6,600
- Employment land: 68ha

4.2 The Allocations Plan contains a large number of allocations of different scales across the settlements within the Forest of Dean. Allocations at the larger settlements are as follows:

Site	Homes	Employment land (ha)
Cinderford (inc approx. 240 homes in Northern Quarter*)	515	12
Coleford	500	8
Lydney	1850	40
Newent	420	5
Tutshill/Sedbury	240	
Other Villages	510	

* as identified in the 2012 adopted Cinderford Northern Quarter Area Action Plan

The plan period runs from 2006 to 2026 and about 3888 dwellings (net) of the 20 year requirement of 6600 had been completed up to March 31 2020.

The Council have commenced a revised Local Plan seeking to cover the period 2021-2041 and the current housing requirement by the standard method is 371pa or a total of 7420 over the period. The Plan is at an early stage with issues and options having been discussed and a broad strategy now being formulated.

5. Cotswold District Local Plan

5.1 The Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted on 3rd August 2018. The plan includes both a core strategy and site allocations. The Local Plan growth requirements are:

- Housing: 8,400 (an average of 420 homes a year)
- Employment land: 24ha

5.2 The Local Plan allocates land within 17 Principal Settlements. Most allocations are smaller scale sites. However, there is one strategic scale allocation at Land south of Chesterton in Cirencester which was granted planning permission in April 2019 and makes a significant contribution towards the District's needs.

The larger sites include the following:

Site	Allocated Homes	Allocated Employment land (ha)
Chesterton, Cirencester	2,350 (c. 1,550 within	9.1

	Plan period)	
Fosseway Ave, Moreton-in-Marsh	119 (although 250 applied for)	
Fire Services College, Moreton-in-Marsh		7.0

Cotswold District has a supply of 6.8 years' of deliverable housing sites for the five year period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2025. The District also passes the Housing Delivery Test with a score of 201% (2,028 dwellings delivered in the past three years measured against a residual housing requirement of 1,010 dwellings).

The District has had 5,204 dwellings completed between April 2011 and March 2020. At 1 April 2020, 4,172 further dwellings had extant planning permission (3,187 of which are expected to be delivered by 2031). It is estimated that total housing delivery over the plan period, including windfalls, will be 10,115 dwellings.

The current standard method for assessing housing needs would increase the District's housing need to 490 dwellings per annum. The District Council has commenced a Local Plan partial update to accommodate the additional growth and to make the Local Plan 'green to the core'.

The Government's proposed standard method calculation of housing need would increase the District's housing need to 1,209 dwellings a year. Such a significant increase and the proposed radically altered planning reforms would require a full Local Plan update. The key issue before the administration is to confirm how it wishes to proceed with plan making activities. If it continues with a partial update of the local plan this may result in costly abortive work. However, should the planning reforms and changes to the District's housing need / requirement not come to fruition, the Council is unlikely to want to cause unnecessary delay the Local Plan partial update.

6. Key Delivery Projects

6.1 As the strategic plans move from adoption the next key step is facilitating the delivery of the plans and the growth objectives and site allocations set out within them. Some of the key projects currently underway are discussed below.

6.2 M5 Junction 10

Gloucestershire County Council have been successful in their bid to Highways England for funding to upgrade Junction 10 of the M5. The agreement has recently been signed and is for £250million with a delivery by October 2024. This funding will be used to improve access to and from the motorway northbound and southbound to a new link road into Cheltenham and will be critical in the delivery of housing and employment growth in this area. Funding is also being made available for improvements to the A4019, Coombe Hill junction and the park and ride facility.

Work is currently underway to determine the exact location and layout of the upgraded motorway junction and a public consultation on this is set to take place in October/November 2020.

6.3 M5 Junction 9 / A46

Options are currently being considered for a new dual carriageway between the M5 near Tewkesbury and Teddington Hands roundabout and associated works to M5

junction 9, thereby removing significant volumes of strategic traffic from the A46 through Ashchurch and enabling this existing section to better cater for local traffic movements between Tewkesbury and Ashchurch. The scheme would improve regional/national north-south road connectivity as well as solving long standing local traffic issues along the A46 corridor. The scheme will also unlock transport capacity to support the delivery of the Tewkesbury Garden Town.

As this proposal is in the early stages of development – an outline business case (OBC) is scheduled to be submitted Winter 2021 - the exact location of the new road and details of the junction upgrade are yet to be decided and work is currently being carried out to identify suitable options to be brought forward for public consultation in early 2021.

A417 Missing Link

The planned £500 million upgrade of the A417, a key route linking the South West and Midlands, will see a single lane stretch of carriageway between the Brockworth bypass and Cowley roundabout in Gloucestershire, upgraded to dual carriageway. This will remove a notorious bottleneck in Gloucestershire's road network, which will benefit road users, local communities and businesses. Several consultations have already taken place and a further consultation is taking place on amendments to specific aspects of the scheme design, ahead of the scheme being submitted for examination in 2021.

6.4 North West Cheltenham Strategic Allocation

A planning application for North West Cheltenham has been submitted jointly to Tewkesbury and Cheltenham Borough Councils. The councils are working closely with the developers and infrastructure providers to progress the application to ensure the timely delivery of development. Transport infrastructure is a key component of these discussions and how the traffic impact of the site is managed and the development of this site, as with North West Cheltenham, is linked to future improvement of M5 J10.

6.5 Golden Valley Development

Now known as the Golden Valley Development, the West Cheltenham strategic allocation site was identified in the JCS to deliver 1,100 homes and 45ha of employment land. Cheltenham Borough and Tewkesbury Borough councils adopted the Golden Valley Development Supplementary Planning Document to help to promote and steer the future development of the strategic allocation.

The GFirst LEP, Cheltenham Borough Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Cheltenham Development Taskforce have been working on the development of a 'cyber hub' as part of the West Cheltenham strategic allocation. Through this work a successful bid was made for £22m funding to help deliver the development of the cyber hub. Close working is being undertaken with the developers and infrastructure providers to progress the site towards a planning application.

Transport infrastructure is again a key component of these discussions and how the traffic impact of the site is managed. The development of this site, as with North West Cheltenham, is linked to future improvement of M5 J10.

6.6 Tewkesbury Garden Town

The Tewkesbury/Ashchurch area was awarded Garden Town status in 2019 based upon a potential development of 10,195 homes and approximately 100 hectares of employment land. The Garden Town will be supported by infrastructure including roads, schools and green space to meet the community needs through excellent 'place making'.

Work continues on master planning the development proposal, which includes gaining an understanding of development principles for the garden town, infrastructure needs as well as workstreams including governance, place making and land assembly.

To support development, an early infrastructure delivery is underway – a new bridge over the railway line at Northway based upon the award of £8.1 million from the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF). The planning application has now been submitted and the next phase includes detailed design and the selection of a construction partner will take place early next year.

6.7 Strategic Site south of Chesterton, Cirencester

Land to the south of Chesterton, Cirencester was granted outline planning permission in April 2019 for, amongst other things, up to 2,350 dwellings (including up to 100 units of student accommodation and 60 homes for the elderly), 9.1 hectares of employment land (B1, B2 and B8 uses) (ref: 16/00054/OUT). It is currently anticipated that around 1,550 dwellings will be completed during the plan period with the remainder coming forward after 2031. Some pre-commencement infrastructure is in the process of being installed. Discharge of condition applications are currently being determined. The first reserved matters application for Phase 1 (of four phases) is expected in late October 2020.

6.8 Cinderford Northern Quarter

A mixed use regeneration area spearheaded by the new Gloucestershire College for the Forest now completed. Includes housing and employment allocations and a spine road the first phase of which is now complete. Has been supported by HCA (as they then were) and land is in public ownership (FoDDC and Homes England).

6.9 Lydney Harbour Regeneration

A comprehensive scheme to safeguard and protect the docks and harbour and realise their full potential whilst supporting a major private sector investment for which a planning application is due shortly. It is centred on a former factory, and will provide jobs and a recreational/ tourism opportunity.

6.10 West of Stonehouse Strategic Allocation

Outline planning permission for 1,350 dwellings, local centre and 10 hectares of employment land was granted in April 2016. Reserved matters were approved in May 2017 for infrastructure to serve Phase 1. Developers were on site September 2017. Redrow and Barratt Homes/David Wilson Homes are delivering the first housing phases. The delivery of employment parcels is linked to progress with initial housing phases to ensure balanced growth of homes and jobs. The implementation of phases is being managed via area masterplans.

6.11 Hunts Grove Extension/Quedgeley East Strategic Allocations

A renegotiated outline permission for Hunts Grove was granted in July 2016 for 1,750 dwellings, school and local centre. 412 dwellings have been built to date. An application for Hunts Grove Extension (750 dwellings) is expected by early spring 2021. Crest Nicholson will oversee delivery as main developer with partner developers building out sub areas within the masterplan. An outline permission for 25 hectares of employment land at Quedgeley East was granted in November 2018 subject to delivering M5 J12 improvements and is now under construction. Capacity issues remain at M5 J12.

7. Strategic Planning Matters

7.1 White Paper: Planning for the Future

On 6th August 2020, the Government's published its White Paper: Planning for the Future for consultation¹. The White Paper sets out a package of proposals for the reform of the planning system in England to streamline and modernise the planning process, improve outcomes on design and sustainability, reform developer contributions and ensure more land is available for development where it is needed.

The White Paper sets out that the current planning system by a number of issues that need to be addressed in order for it to be fit for purpose. This includes being too complex and inconsistent with a loss of public trust; that the plan making process is too long with the evidence underpinning it being too complex and opaque; the approach to developer contributions to infrastructure and affordable housing is too complex and protracted; that there is not enough focus on design; and that it is not resulting in enough homes being built. It also states the system is based on 20th century technology and needs to be modernised.

The White Paper sets out a number of proposals across three 'pillars' of 'Planning for development', 'Planning for beautiful and sustainable places' and 'Planning for infrastructure and connected places'

Key proposals include simplifying the role of Local Plans, to expedite the process to developing plans, and changing the emphases to a more 'zonal' approach to designating land for development or protection that focuses on setting out local specific design codes rather than generic planning policies. Proposals look to make decision making faster and more certain by front-loading the plan making process and making the application process more standard and digital. Great emphasis is put on design and place making with a recognition of the changing resources, skills and priorities needed for councils. The White Paper proposes to consolidate the existing Community Infrastructure Levy and S106 system for development contributions into a single consolidated Infrastructure Levy through which affordable housing would be delivered.

This planning reform, if it follows the lines of the White Paper, would consist of a major change to the planning system and would have a significant impact on strategic plan making across Gloucestershire.

Changes to the Current Planning System Consultation

The government undertook a concurrent consultation between August and October

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907647/MHCLG-Planning-Consultation.pdf

2020 on Changes to the current planning system². This aims to improve the effectiveness of the current planning system. Its four main proposals are changes to the standard method for assessing local housing need; securing of First Homes through developer contributions in the short term pending the transition to a new system; lifting the threshold below which developers do not need to contribute to affordable housing to 40 or 50 dwellings for an initial 18-month period; and extending the current Permission in Principle to major development.

The proposed standard method for assessing housing need, if implemented, would have an impact on strategic planning in Gloucestershire. The table below identifies current and proposed housing needs to illustrate the differences.

	Current Local Plan requirement	Current standard method requirement	Proposed new standard method requirement
Cheltenham	546	531	528
Cotswold	420	490	1,209
Forest of Dean	323	370	608
Gloucester	727	658	578
Stroud	456	635	786
Tewkesbury	495	564	1,037

The proposed increased threshold of 40 or 50 new homes below which affordable housing could not be sought would also reduce the delivery of affordable housing in Gloucestershire. It is expected that there would be much longer lasting impacts of this policy than the initial 18-months that it would be in place for.

7.3 Gloucestershire Strategic Planning Statement of Common Ground

The Committee has agreed to the preparation of a strategic planning framework for Gloucestershire. This commitment is being taken forward through the preparation of a statement of common ground which will be entered into by the six local planning authorities, the County Council and GFirst LEP.

This strategic framework would set out an agreed long-term view of growth in the county. This would allow the local planning authorities to continue to deliver current and future spatial plans and policies, while enabling them to work together to determine a coordinated approach to future strategic planning in the county. This would improve strategic planning coordination, cooperation and communication to avoid potential conflict between plans and partners.

A Statement of Common Ground is currently being drafted amongst officers of each of the partner authorities.

²

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907215/200805_Changes_to_the_current_planning_system_FINAL_version.pdf