



Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground - Strategic Planning

Dates between which decision will be taken	Earliest date: 18 April 2022 Latest date: 16 June 2022
Cabinet Member	Cllr. David Gray - Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning
Key Decision	Yes
Purpose of Report	To seek approval of the DRAFT Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground. This would enable work to commence on an 'Action Plan' to advance the agreements outlined within the Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground covering Strategic Planning issues within the county.
Recommendations	That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning approves the DRAFT Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground, delegates authority to sign the final version once it has been formally agreed by each of the partners and delegates authority to the Executive Director of Economy, Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning to approve future minor changes to the document.
Reasons for Recommendations	<p>The Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee requested officers from the relevant organisations (x7 Local Authorities and GFirst LEP) to prepare the Gloucester Statement of Common Ground (GSoCG) to draw together the key strategic planning matters facing Gloucestershire and agree on how these matters are best addressed.</p> <p>Work on the GSoCG 'Action Plan' will commence, subject to the approval of the Draft GSoCG by the relevant authorities. The purpose of this plan is to identify the areas of work required to advance the agreements in the GSoCG, the resource and cost implications of doing that work etc.</p>

Resource Implications	<p>At this stage approval of the DRAFT Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground would enable only the production of the 'Action Plan'. This would require officer time from the relevant organisations. No requests for additional funding have been made by the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee to deliver this.</p> <p>Once the 'Action Plan' is completed this will include an estimate of resource implications (primarily finance and staff) of further work to be agreed.</p> <p>A separate report will cover this issue to ensure the full resource implications of progressing the agreements outlined within the Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground are fully understood by all relevant authorities (x7 Local Authorities and GFirst LEP).</p>
Background Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Papers from the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee from 20th January 2021 – agenda item 7 https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=725&MId=10195&Ver=4 • DRAFT Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground (Appendix A)
Statutory Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localism Act 2011 • National Planning Policy Framework 2021
Divisional Councillor(s)	<p>All Council Divisions would be potentially impacted by the agreements outlined in the Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground.</p>
Officer	<p>Any representations should be sent to:</p> <p>Name: Ben Watts Telephone: 01452 426771 Email: ben.watts@gloucestershire.gov.uk By 5pm on 8 June 2022</p>
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nov 2018 - Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee request officers from the seven local authorities and the GFirst LEP to produce a Statement of Common Ground to draw together the key strategic planning matters facing Gloucestershire and agree on how these matters are best addressed • Jan 2021 – Draft Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground is considered by the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee where further time is requested to consider the document. • Feb 2022 – The Draft Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground is agreed and each of the seven authorities requested to approve and sign the document • 2022/23 - Following the approval of the document by the seven local authorities work will commence on an 'Action Plan' to advance the agreements outlined in the statement including the resource implications of doing so. Once completed this will be considered by the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee. Subject to the views of the committee a future ICM Report may be required to approve any recommendations.

Background

1. The purpose of this report is to present the DRAFT Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground (GSoCG) for approval. The GSoCG is provided in Appendix A.
2. The GSoCG outlines the key strategic planning matters facing Gloucestershire. The long-term aim is for these areas of agreement to inform the development of a Gloucestershire Spatial Development Strategy. The GSoCG as currently drafted represents the first iteration of the document. As such it needs to be considered as a live document that will evolve in time as new evidence is produced.
3. The Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC) is the coordinating body for the GSoCG, but each authority would retain authority to approve any changes. For the GSoCG it is proposed that any future changes would be agreed by the Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning.
4. The purpose of the SOCG is:
 - a) To identify and demonstrate where common ground exists between the parties.
 - b) To identify and agree an action plan on the strategic spatial planning matters in Gloucestershire that require collaborative working between the parties.
 - c) To identify in principle, the potential response to addressing the strategic spatial planning matters.
 - d) To provide the basis for a 'live' document to allow for regular updates which capture progress against responding to the strategic spatial planning matters, acknowledging that responding to the Climate emergency will be the "Golden thread" that runs through the strategic planning activities and the outputs of the GSoCG.
 - e) To meet (in part) the requirements placed on Local Planning Authorities from the National Planning Policy Framework updated July 2021 (the Framework) to discharge the statutory 'Duty-to-Cooperate' as part of their local plan preparation
 - f) To respond to the GEGJC to develop a Statement of Common Ground as the basis to consider the development of a Gloucestershire Spatial Development Strategy.
5. A key difference from the previous draft GSoCG produced in February 2021 is that it now includes a list of areas where no common ground exists between parties. Tewkesbury Borough Council could not agree to certain strategic planning matters as currently drafted relating to climate change; transport; Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure; and minerals and waste.
6. Subject to approval this would enable officers from the relevant organisations (x7 Local Authorities and GFirst LEP) to commence work on producing an 'Action Plan'.

7. This 'Action Plan' would advance the agreements outlined in the statement including an estimate of resource implications (primarily finance and staff) of further work required to progress the agreements including the production of a Gloucestershire Spatial Plan.
8. This report is required following agreement of the document in February 2022. Following this it was recommended that each of the relevant organisations seek formal approval of the GSoCG.
9. At this stage approval is only sought on the Draft GSoCG to enable the 'Action Plan' to be produced. This plan will be initially considered by the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee later this year before any further action is taken.
10. Since the late 2000s and the removal of the County Wide Structure Planning process in Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire has not had one single, overarching strategic planning policy document. Such documents provide a wide range of benefits - ensuring development occurs in the most appropriate locations; providing a basis for funding decisions and bids; and providing certainty for the community, including the development community.
11. A SoCG provides the opportunity to draw together the key strategic planning matters facing Gloucestershire and agree on how these matters are best addressed. Ultimately, and subject to approvals where necessary, the GSoCG provides the basis of agreeing the policy foundations for future single non statutory strategic plan for Gloucestershire.
12. As part of its role, the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee have committed to:

"Deliver a high-level spatial planning document for Gloucestershire which will set out agreed broad allocations for housing and economic growth across all districts"

And

"The development of a high-level future growth document for Gloucestershire, and work with the Local Plan teams to translate this into an agreed and adopted Gloucestershire Spatial Development Strategy"

13. In November 2018, the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee endorsed a proposal to develop a "Statement of Common Ground" as the most effective way of advancing these commitments in the first instance – a GSoCG provides the opportunity to:
 - Present a coherent, agreed development strategy for Gloucestershire to Government, the development industry, investors, and the community at large
 - Agree on the infrastructure priorities for Gloucestershire and the funding mechanisms to achieve delivery; and
 - Address common and cross boundary matters (such as economic growth and climate change) in a strategic manner.

14. Any Statement of Common Ground also has a statutory planning purpose - to meet (in part at least) the requirements placed on all Local Planning Authorities through the National Planning Policy Framework updated July 2021 (NPPF) to discharge the statutory 'Duty-to-Cooperate' as part of their local plan preparation. The various statutory requirements of a Statement of Common Ground are set out in Appendix 1 of the GSoCG for ease of reference.

Options

15. **Option 1 - Do nothing** – this would not honour the request of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee and would create issues for local authorities undertaking their statutory plan making duties. This is not considered a viable option as some form of Statement of Common Ground should be developed across Gloucestershire or at least between some authorities in the County to satisfy the requirements of national planning policy guidance.

16. **Option 2 - Develop a Gloucestershire Spatial Plan** without fully understanding the resource implications for the relevant organisations. This is not considered a viable option due to the significant body of work required to produce a Spatial Plan. The GSoCG as drafted suggests that a Spatial Plan for Gloucestershire should be considered after deliberations on the GSoCG and production of the 'Action Plan' to outline time, cost, and resource implications of producing a Gloucestershire Spatial Plan.

17. **Option 3 - Approve the draft GSoCG** to enable the relevant organisations to commence work on an 'Action Plan' that would advance the agreements outlined in the statement. This is the recommended option. This option will enable officers from the relevant organisations to commence work on producing an 'Action Plan'. Once completed, the Action Plan will outline the time, cost, and resource implications of producing a Gloucestershire Spatial Plan. This will enable the relevant organisations to make an informed decision about producing a Gloucestershire Spatial Plan.

18. **Option 4 - Approve the draft GSoCG; but 'opt out' of some or all the proposed agreements.** This is not considered a viable option as it would not be in keeping with the sentiment of working on the areas of common ground identified as a priority during the stakeholder engagement process. Agreeing some and not all the agreements could undermine the process. There will be a further opportunity to consider GCC's support once the 'Action Plan' has been produced.

Risks

19. The risks of not approving the GSoCG are to delay the production of a future Gloucestershire Spatial Plan which would outline a future blueprint to sustainable growth in the county covering education, highways, transport, waste, minerals and waste planning, flood, and libraries provision.

20. Without a Spatial Plan, GCC does not have a role in the strategic planning decision making process. Growth decisions would remain at the discretion of the local planning authorities through their local plan making process. The existing disjointed

approach to plan making on a countywide basis is unsustainable and unless changed will result in viability issues for statutory services delivered by GCC.

Financial implications

21. At this stage approval of the DRAFT GSoCG would only enable the production of the 'Action Plan'. This would require officer time from the relevant organisations. No requests for additional funding have been made by the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee to deliver this.
22. Once the 'Action Plan' is completed this will include an estimate of resource implications (primarily finance and staff) of further work to be agreed.
23. A separate report will cover this issue later in 2022/23 to ensure the full resource implications of progressing the agreements outlined within the Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground are fully understood by all relevant authorities (x7 Local Authorities and GFirst LEP).

Climate change implications

24. The GSoCG will address climate change in a strategic manner across the relevant organisations (x7 Local Authorities and GFirst LEP).

Equality implications

25. At this stage no Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed. Once the resulting 'Action Plan' has been produced this will allow for a robust EIA to be completed.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) implications

26. It is highly likely that as this GSoCG progresses there will be an increased need for information sharing, which may include personal information. It should be noted that all parties are signed up to the GISPA (Gloucestershire Information Sharing Partnership Agreement).

Social value implications

27. The GSoCG will address social value implications in a strategic manner across the relevant organisations (x7 Local Authorities and GFirst LEP). Once the resulting 'Action Plan' has been produced this will allow for a robust assessment to be made.

Consultation feedback

28. Work on the GSoCG has been underway since early 2019; there has been a wide range of stakeholders engaged including representatives (members and officers) of all 7 Gloucestershire authorities, GFirst LEP, interest groups and other organisations.

29. Drafts of the GSoCG have been shared with all 7 Gloucestershire authorities and the LEP, comments noted, and changes made. The version included in Appendix A is the culmination of that work.

Officer recommendations

30. That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning approves the DRAFT Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground, delegates authority to sign the final version once it has been formally agreed by each of the partners and delegates authority to the Executive Director of Economy, Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning to approve future minor changes to the document.

Performance management/follow-up

31. The GSoCG should be a live document. As such, annual update reports will be presented to the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee.

32. Work on the GSoCG 'Action Plan' will commence, subject to the approval of the Draft GSoCG by the relevant authorities. The purpose of this plan is to identify the areas of work required to advance the agreements in the GSoCG, the resource and cost implications of doing that work etc.

33. The Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning shall be kept fully updated on the progress being made and if appropriate a future ICM Report shall be presented outlining the financial implications of commencing work on a Gloucestershire Spatial Plan.

APPENDIX A - DRAFT Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground