

Gloucestershire 2050 – The Big Conversation

Tewkesbury Borough Council Response

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Vision 2050 Big Conversation.
- 1.2 This response was developed following a 2050 workshop for Councillors held on 11 June 2018 and formally approved at the Council meeting on 24 July 2018. The document takes full account of the opinions expressed by Councillors throughout the process to prepare the response and is aligned with the Council's current policy framework related to strategic planning and economic growth.

2.0 General

- 2.1 The Council is positive about encouraging growth and economic success within Tewkesbury Borough and is already working to achieve this with partners in the area covered by the Joint Core Strategy (JCS). Furthermore, the Council sees growth and economic success as key drivers to secure an inclusive prosperous Gloucestershire in the future. The Council therefore fully supports the aim of the Vision 2050 project in looking forward to 2050 with a view to shaping a positive future for Gloucestershire.
- 2.2 The Council is wholly supportive of a process which thinks ahead, beyond the life of current plans and supports the delivery of the needs and aspirations of future generations. Moreover, the Council would make the general point that the outcomes of the work to deliver the Vision 2050 ambitions and associated projects, when these are determined, should be to the benefit of all sections of our communities and all ages and abilities.

3.0 The case for change

- 3.1 The Council accepts the two general statements made as 'The case for change' within the Vision 2050 documentation. However, the Council cautions against over reliance upon current statistics to over-analyse problems which will change over time. Therefore, whilst recognising the Vision 2050 focus on the need to retain and attract younger people as part of the overall aims, the Council strongly supports the need to focus on all sections of all our communities in the delivery of our ambitions and projects to create an inclusive County.
- 3.2 Whilst the challenges facing the County are generally accepted, the Council would make the point that they are made from a negative standpoint. The period to 2050 will offer many opportunities and we should plan flexibly and responsively, as opportunities arise, to secure the benefits to achieve maximum prosperity.
- 3.3 The Council accepts and supports the 'recipe for a healthy economy' as set out in the Vision 2050 presentations, but would note that aerospace engineering is included within the strengths set out.
- 3.4 Taking inclusive economic prosperity as a key driver of the Vision 2050, the Council recognises the need for significant new job provision in the period to 2050, especially in the successful sectors identified in the recipe for a healthy economy. The Council also recognises that this economic growth cannot succeed without the people with the right skills to fill the new jobs.
- 3.5 The Council recognises that the people who will occupy the new jobs will need houses of suitable types to attract them to and retain them in Gloucestershire. Therefore, the need to provide significant increases in housing provision, in suitable locations, of all tenures and types in the period to 2050 is integral to economic growth delivery.

- 3.6 The Council recognises that the County has an increasing older population. The care needs of this sector of the population will require younger working people to fill the increased numbers of care related jobs. However, care provision is only part of the story and the other needs and aspirations of this increasing and often affluent sector of the population should be fully accounted for in the ambitions and projects associated with Vision 2050. As we will be living longer in future, older people should not be seen as a problem, but valued for their contribution to the prosperity of Gloucestershire and society in general.
- 3.7 In delivering the 'recipe for a healthy economy' expansion of all sections of educational provision will be required with a greater dialogue between education providers and businesses to match jobs with skills. Currently, Vision 2050 recognises the need for high standards in the higher educational sector as a means of attracting and retaining young people and this is accepted. However, the Council strongly supports the need for the development of educational provision at all levels to include further and vocational education opportunities, including apprenticeships, which will be so crucial to business success and general growth in the county.
- 3.8 Close relationships between business and vocational, further and higher education is required to achieve growth in our key sectors and attract and retain young people by matching the needs of business to education provision.

4.0 The Vision 2050 ambitions

- 4.1 The eight ambitions are generally supported by the Council in that they are broad statements of a desired state and thus difficult to argue against. There is a lot of read across between the ambitions, but the Council considers all the ambitions to be valid.
- 4.2 The ambitions are currently broad and not defined in terms of what achievement of the ambitions might mean and how the ambitions will be achieved. There is currently not much linking of the achievement of the ambitions and the six ideas.
- 4.3 Although a number of the ideas in Vision 2050 will contribute to the achievement of the ambitions, more work and activity will be required if the broad nature of the ambitions is to be achieved fully. Therefore the Council feels that each ambition should have its own detailed action plan developed through partnership and regularly reviewed.
- 4.4 Action plans for ambitions should be realistic and easy to understand to ensure public buy-in.
- 4.5 Specific comments about the ambitions are listed below:
- **Magnet**
 - The creation of a successful County through growth will automatically create a magnet effect for employment age people.
 - The focus on young people and young families is correct, but we must remember older people do bring benefits to the county as well.
 - **Prosperous**
 - Job creation and business success is vital to the success of the County.
 - Prosperity must be inclusive and the County should use increased prosperity to deal with deprivation and poor social mobility.
 - The value of all jobs in the contribution they make to society's economic success should be recognised, not just the creation of high value jobs. This should be recognised in educational and skill development plans.

- **Inclusive**
 - Delivery of Vision 2050 should as far as is possible involve the whole community. Achievement of these eight ambitions will require this approach.
 - All sections of the community should be involved in decision making especially young people.
- **Skilled**
 - Education improvements are needed, but should provide for all educational needs if our people are to be provided with the right skills. This will require greater focus on apprenticeships and vocational training as well as higher education.
 - Gloucestershire's agriculture industry remains an important part of our economy and beautiful landscape, therefore agriculture education opportunities should form part of delivering an educated workforce fit for the future.
- **Innovative**
 - Innovation has long been a part of Gloucestershire's unique offer and helps deliver confidence.
 - Gloucestershire should build on its economic heritage, ie aviation and other advanced engineering innovation together with new technologies present in the County such as cyber and digital. Combination of technologies could also contribute a unique approach for example through combination of cyber with advanced engineering through robotics.
- **Healthy and happy**
 - The Council recognises that good jobs and homes make people happy.
 - Prosperous communities are more likely to be healthy and harmonious, policies which encourage self-sufficiency and support within communities will assist in achieving this ambition.
 - Therefore, the ambition should also include people taking responsibility for themselves and their communities.
- **Connected**
 - Transport and cyber connections are vital for the County both internally and externally.
 - Connectivity infrastructure must be programmed and funded to support growth plans delivery.
 - Gloucestershire's road are currently of poor quality in places and will require investment to support substantial improvement if we are to be proud of our transport system.
 - The importance of good connectivity with other regions cannot be overstated. In the period to 2050, the County will benefit in growth opportunities through being better connected with key areas such as Bristol, Birmingham, London and the Milton Keynes/Oxford/Cambridge corridor.
- **Sustainable**
 - Sustainable growth is vital and the growth should not be at the expense of the beautiful landscape that we enjoy and would wish to maintain for the future.

4.6 The Council proposes the addition of two new Ambitions for the 2050 Vision, they are as follows:

Opportunity

Gloucestershire is a prosperous County where opportunities are created for people and people are

- Supported to be the best they can be.
- Free to develop their own potential.
- Encouraged to take responsibility for their own prosperity and well-being.

Valued

Gloucestershire is a County where:

- All people are valued for their contributions to society.
- The value of all jobs to the community's prosperity is recognised regardless of type or perceived level.
- Educational provision for skills development is delivered at all levels and supports people to achieve their aspirations and equips them to make realistic life choices.

5.0 The six ideas

5.1 Super City

- The concept of super city currently implies the creation of a 'third heart' for Gloucestershire in Tewkesbury Borough in between the urban centres of Cheltenham and Gloucester. This concept is not well explained and the use of the words 'Super City' is not helpful as it is not easily understood and thus raises negatives in the minds of many people. These potential negative issues will include, loss of, or reduction in the identities of the City of Gloucester and the town of Cheltenham, damage to the city/town centres and potential unnecessary development of green belt protected areas to name but three.
- Although the Council accepts that the idea of a 'Super City' may appeal to some of the younger population, the concept is confusing and unhelpful and the general aims of the 2050 Vision for this area of Gloucestershire could be achieved in other ways without references to a 'Super City'. Gloucestershire through Vision 2050 should seek to play to its many strengths and not seek to emulate metropolitan city existence. The County should create its own brand. The term 'Super City' confuses this point.
- Therefore, the Council's firm position is that the words 'Super City' and the concept of a 'third heart' for the county should be removed from the 2050 Vision and not included in any future next steps documents.
- The 'Super City' element of the 2050 Vision should be renamed and re-scoped taking the following points into account.
 - The Council has major growth ambitions and wholeheartedly supports the need for planned economic and housing growth within the area of the three JCS authorities in the period to 2050. That growth should serve the whole of the County and be attractive to young people and families.
 - The Council recognises that the growth that might be positioned within that area between Cheltenham and Gloucester City in the period to 2050 could support, for example, the development of the Cyber Park project, university and research establishment enhancement, new teaching hospital provision, cultural facilities and essential infrastructure schemes. This kind of development would make a radical positive difference to the County support economic growth and serve the whole community.
 - The Council would not support the use of the space in between the two urban centres to provide housing alone, although some housing provision may be required as part of more important developments which deliver significant economic uplift.
 - The infrastructure schemes could include improved road and public transport improvement between the two urban centres and possibly rapid transport systems such as trams/light railway systems.
 - The Council supports the need for public bodies, business, government and other partners to work together to deliver the broad Vision 2050 economic growth aims for this area. This will require a common approach across the area that recognises the need to work in partnership and not compete against each other which is not in the interest of the Gloucestershire.

- It is likely that development and delivery of shared aims which can be agreed and owned by all partners will require exploration of different partnership structures than those that currently exist and the Council is willing to enter these discussions.
- Effective partnership is required, failure of the partners to agree common aims and strategic plans and importantly, build trust will result in failure and wasted effort.
- If they are to be fit for purpose, partnership structures or delivery vehicles need to be established to deliver set and commonly agreed objectives. The development of appropriate partnership structures may need to be phased as the Vision 2050 plans for the JCS area develop over time and tasks are identified and firmed up by the partners.
- Partners should bear in mind that long term strategic planning of the area between Cheltenham and Gloucester will need to be undertaken in accordance with national and local planning requirements and this will be the responsibility of Tewkesbury Borough Council and its JCS Planning Authority partners
- It is important to note that a large part of the land area within the Super City concept is designated green belt. As the planning authority with the responsibility for most of this area, this Council would comment that the restrictions this will place upon certain types of development should be recognised.
- Appropriate project branding/naming will be helpful to replace the Super City concept, but this must faithfully capture the nature of the project aims and be readily understandable by all.
- Gloucestershire airport is a key element of this council's Economic Development Strategy and is supported within the JCS planning policies. Therefore, the Council wishes to make specific comments about the future role of Gloucestershire airport, which could in some people's minds be negatively impacted by the 'Super City' idea. They are as follows:

- Gloucestershire airport is currently a vital part of the economy of the Borough of Tewkesbury and Gloucestershire, contributing in the region of £250 million, employing over 500 people and handling over 80,000 aircraft movements in 2017.
- Gloucestershire airport already addresses the challenges and ambitions of Vision 2050. It attracts young people in providing vocational training and employment leading to inspiring careers in aviation and precision engineering. In the period to 2050, the airport has the real potential to develop into a centre of excellence in the aviation business world and thereby make a huge contribution to the achievement of the 'Magnet' county ambition.
- The airport provides an important regional general aviation facility and is one of a limited number of such facilities with a multi-directional runway configuration, making it ideal for pilot training and multi-wind direction operation.
- The airport provides a variety of direct and indirect aviation links to many of the surrounding engineering businesses, a large number of which are world class and make a major contribution to the County's economy.
- The airport has an ambitious, strong and growing business model based around private charter flights, pilot training, aircraft servicing, hangar space for private aircraft and airport property development for businesses. In the future it is likely to play an even more important role as its business plan is delivered and the economic contribution from this important facility increases.
- In the future, developments in air travel already underway could increase the importance of the airport as an air travel connection hub by allowing the return of the provision of public scheduled flights in addition to the general aviation functions. Having a convenient facility of this kind would be vitally important to the success of Gloucestershire's connectivity between city regions as well as for internal UK holiday flights.
- The airport provision is likely to be an essential requirement to support the development and success of the Cyber Park through the provision of a business air travel facility on its doorstep.
- The Council would make the strong comment that future work to deliver the Vision 2050 should not in any way threaten the current or future success of Gloucestershire airport either by direct reference or implication.

- The Council gives the future success of the airport its strongest possible support and will press firmly to ensure that its future development is an integral part of the Vision for 2050. The Council will expect its partners to share its ambitions in respect of this vital air transport facility.

5.2 Cyber Park

- This project is already a major integral part of the plans of the JCS authorities. It has the potential to be a tremendous driver of economic success, digital innovation and major enhancement of the Gloucestershire University. This is a project of local, regional and national importance and will put Gloucestershire firmly on the digital economy map.
- The Cyber Park and adjacent housing sites will, if delivered with crucial infrastructure, support the development of an integrated high quality commercial and housing development which will underpin the future economic success of the whole of the county.
- The concept plans and ideas to drive economic success, which replace the Super City concepts within Vision 2050, should use this project as their focus.
- The Cyber Park project is fully supported by the Council.

5.3 Regional Parks

- The need for green space and countryside areas for people to enjoy is recognised as an important element of the 2050 Vision.
- The provision of regional parks should not be detrimental to farming activities and related businesses.
- The development of the green spaces within the Forest of Dean as a destination attraction for the people of Gloucestershire and tourists is supported.

5.4 Lydney – Sharpness

- The Council would comment that the bridge and the associated growth proposal has not been the subject of rigorous feasibility appraisal and currently has not seen evidence to support the deliverability of this idea within Vision 2050.
- The housing growth required to support this proposal would be extensive and its delivery may not be practical.
- The cost of the bridge could demand most of the infrastructure funding arising from the extensive new settlements leaving insufficient for other essentials like local roads and schools.
- The new bridge would therefore require government funding support and this is likely only to be forthcoming if there was a regional/national transport imperative to provide a new road link at this point.
- Removal of Severn crossing tolls and growth in the West of England Combined Authority area and in South and mid Wales may give rise to effects which could assist this proposal in the future.
- There is a risk that the cost of the infrastructure involved in the bridge and associated road provision could draw government infrastructure funding away from other Gloucestershire growth projects. These include those projects associated with the economic success of the JCS area which will deliver most of the economic uplift sought by the Vision 2050 concept.
- However, the Council would not object if other bodies wish to further investigate the feasibility of this idea.

5.5 A Cotswold Airport

- The Council considers that an international airport located in the Cotswolds is impractical and undeliverable. This is because of its completely inappropriate location which gives rise to environmental concerns, lack of supporting transport infrastructure, unlikely use by the travelling public, competition with existing and growing international airports already successfully operating and supporting this region. Furthermore, the cost of development and operation is likely to be prohibitive.
- Plans to develop another airport within Gloucestershire could threaten the existing Gloucestershire airport. Vision 2050 should support the future development of Gloucestershire airport as Gloucestershire's primary airport facility as previously described.
- Improved connectivity to international air travel hubs outside the County by road and air should be a focus of Vision 2050.
- The Council does not support this proposal and proposes its removal from the 2050 ideas.

5.6 Cotswold Waterpark

- The Council has no comments to make in respect of this proposal.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The Council hopes the comments in this response are helpful and looks forward to working with partners and communities to develop and deliver the Vision 2050.