

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	6 March 2019
Subject:	Development of a Strategic Planning Framework for Gloucestershire County to 2050 and Beyond
Report of:	Head of Development Services
Corporate Lead:	Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Leader of the Council/Lead Member for Built Environment
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to update Members on progress to date in respect of the creation of a Strategic Planning Framework for Gloucestershire County to 2050 and beyond and to make recommendations on the way forward on the preparation of a non-statutory Statement of Common Ground.

The Statement of Common Ground (SCG) would be entered into by the six local planning authorities, the County Council and the GFirst LEP. The SCG supports the opportunity for individual authorities to collectively realise their economic growth potential, attract infrastructure investment, and deliver on their development needs by working together to set out an agreed long-term view of growth in Gloucestershire. It would also allow the consideration of cross boundary needs where appropriate demonstrating to potential funders that, on strategic matters, the authorities, and where applicable their partners, have common objectives and a collective mechanism for promoting those objectives. The formal approval of the Statement of Common Ground will remain the responsibility of the constituent local authorities and GFirst LEP.

This report seeks approval of the principle of all SCG partners cooperating to develop a Strategic Planning Framework for the county on the basis of a SCG.

Recommendation:

To RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that it agrees to work in partnership with the five other Local Planning Authorities, Gloucestershire County Council and the GFirst LEP to develop a broad Strategic Planning Framework for Gloucestershire, to 2050 and beyond, via the preparation of a 'Statement of Common Ground'.

Reasons for Recommendation:

To ensure effective, coordinated spatial planning for the long-term future of Gloucestershire through collective working to prepare a strategic framework for the County to 2050 and beyond which will avoid duplication of effort, potential conflicts and deliver cost efficiencies through joint commissioning.

Resource Implications:

There are no direct resource implications arising from this report, other than the continued funding of the Gloucestershire Strategic Planning Coordinator which is funded on a two-year partnership basis between all Councils. There will be further costs much of which will be associated with existing plan development. Any additional budget requirements will be brought forward for consideration as they arise.

Legal Implications:

Section 33A(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which is in respect of the duty to co-operate in relation to the planning of sustainable development provides that each person who is a local planning authority, County Council and certain other bodies (such as the Environment Agency and Homes and Communities Agency) must co-operate with each other and local enterprise partnerships in maximising the effectiveness with which certain activities are undertaken. These activities are the preparation of local development plans (including development plan documents) and any activities that can reasonably be considered to prepare the way for/support for such activities so far as relating to a strategic matter.

A strategic matter for the duty is sustainable development or use of land that has or would have a significant impact on at least two planning areas and sustainable development or use of land in a two-tier area if the development or use is a county matter or has or would have a significant impact on a county matter.

Under sections 19(1B) to (1C) of the 2004 Act, each local planning authority must identify strategic priorities for development and use of land in the authority's area and policies to address those priorities must be set out in the local authority's development plan documents (taken as a whole).

Paragraph 20 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) sets out the matters that strategic policies should provide for and under paragraph 27 it is stated that in order to demonstrate effective and ongoing joint working, strategic policymaking authorities should prepare and maintain one or more statements of common ground, documenting the cross-boundary matters being addressed and progress in cooperating to address these. These should be produced using the approach set out in national planning guidance and be made publicly available throughout the plan-making process to provide transparency.

When soundness of plans are tested under the NPPF (2019) one element of this under paragraph 35 is that the plan should be deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the SCG. Therefore, although not a statutory document, SCG dealing with these matters will be expected when plans are at examination. The formal approval of the SCG will remain the responsibility of each of the parties to it.

Risk Management Implications:

Failure to maximise the opportunity created through the creation of an effective Strategic Planning Framework for Gloucestershire County would mean that opportunities for effective strategic development discussions are lost. The opportunity to save resources through joint commissioning of an effective evidence base may also be lost.

Performance Management Follow-up:

The Council will regularly monitor the effectiveness of the SCG as part of the planning and development process. The Leaders Board will receive regular updates on progress being made. Individual Councils will similarly receive reports as and where appropriate either for decision-making purposes or to update on issues arising out of the creation of a strategic planning framework (in the form of a SCG).

Environmental Implications:

The SCG will contain matters relating to the environmental, social and economic outputs of the area. In itself it will not be subject to the same requirements for a Sustainability Appraisal in the same way a Statutory Planning Document does. A Sustainability Appraisal that encompasses a Strategic Environmental Assessment as required by EU Directive (2001/42/EC) will still be required to be produced for the local plan documents.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 It has been recognised for some time that a better coordinated approach to long term spatial planning in Gloucestershire would be beneficial. Such an approach could provide an agreed broad vision for the future growth of the County which would support local plan development and avoid duplication, potential conflict between plans and fulfil the duty to cooperate. This partnership approach could also better coordinate infrastructure requirements and associated funding whilst delivering potential savings through joint commissioning of development plan evidence bases.

1.2 These advantages can be gained by working together and by cooperating effectively, however the responsibility for spatial planning decision making will remain with the local plan authorities individually.

1.3 In June the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC) appointed the Strategic Planning Coordinator for the County. The role of this post is to work towards better planning coordination in the County. The Gloucestershire Strategic Planning Coordination project has now been running for six months. Work to date has focussed upon:

- Establishing the governance and working arrangements for the project including the setting up of the Leaders Board (which consists of Leaders of all the District Councils, the Leader of the County Council and LEP representatives) and associated officer group under the auspices of the GEGJC. The governance structure is shown at Appendix 1.
- Synergising the relationship between this piece of work and the continuing work on the existing local plans.
- Reviewing the available evidence and developing the means of supplementing the evidence base through collaborative working.
- Reviewing existing joint planning arrangements and partnerships, for example evidence commissioning.

Considering the type and nature of 'framework document' for Gloucestershire.

2.0 WORK TO DATE

2.1 The Leaders Board has been meeting on a regular basis since its inception in June 2018. One of the key discussions that has been had is the consideration of the type of plan that is appropriate for Gloucestershire. These discussions have concluded that whilst there are other methods of securing a Strategic Planning Framework and its associated benefits the most appropriate model for Strategic Planning in Gloucestershire is considered to be the non-statutory Statement of Common Ground (SCG).

- 2.2** The SCG is a Statement which has been established by the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 and will be required to be produced and agreed between the six local planning authorities, the County Council, GFirst LEP and other key parties as appropriate. It will set out the agreed position in respect of cross boundary strategic planning issues, demonstrating that the 'Duty to Cooperate' has been fulfilled, but it can also be used to set out a long term agreed vision for the broad location of development within the county.
- 2.3** Following consideration of the best way to deliver a long term strategic planning framework, the Leaders Board consider that a joint SCG would be the best mechanism to deliver a coordinated approach agreed by all partners. This will allow local planning authorities to continue to deliver current and future spatial plans and policies, but will also allow the local planning authorities to work together to determine a coordinated approach to future strategic planning in the county and maximise resource efficiency.
- 2.4** This will also allow the local authorities to look beyond their plan periods and link into conversations regarding Gloucestershire 2050 to seek to meet aspirations for growth and infrastructure. Furthermore, effective cooperation enables strategic policy-making authorities and infrastructure providers to establish whether additional strategic cross-boundary infrastructure is required. The statement would be evidence that the strategic policy-making authorities have sought agreement with the relevant bodies and, in relation to the Community Infrastructure Levy, it can form part of the evidence base for the Infrastructure Funding Statement.

3.0 STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND (SCG)

- 3.1** The NPFF 2018 sets out the details expected to be covered within a SCG these are as follows:
1. A spatial portrait and narrative of the geography of the area and the key strategic matters being addressed by the statement, for example meeting the housing need and economic growth for the area and key environmental issues such as flood protection, climate change impact reduction, air quality etc.;
 2. Details of the plan-making authorities responsible for joint working detailed in the statement, along with any others engaged in the process and the associated governance arrangements for the cooperation process, including how the statement will be maintained;
 3. The housing requirements in any adopted and (if known) emerging strategic policies relevant to housing within the area covered by the statement as well as a view of the future growth necessary;
 4. An understanding of the distribution of housing and economic growth needs in the area as agreed through the plan-making process, or the process for agreeing the distribution of need (including unmet need) across the area;
 5. A record of where agreements have (or have not) been reached on key strategic matters, including the process for reaching agreements on these; and
 6. Any additional strategic matters to be addressed by the statement which have not already been addressed, including a brief description how the statement relates to any other SCG ground covering all or part of the same area.
- 3.2** The detail and scope in the statement is expected to be proportionate to the matters being addressed but would seek to tackle the key issues facing the County and the aspirations for strategic growth and infrastructure requirements.

3.3 In addition to the NPPF requirements, the Leaders Board consider that a SCG for Gloucestershire will:

1. Draw from existing and developing local plans and plan development processes to provide an agreed joined up picture of growth within Gloucestershire.
2. Include the broad aspirations of partners for the promotion of growth within Gloucestershire.
3. Provide an agreed approach between all agencies to allow cooperation in delivery of plans and infrastructure.
4. Improve strategic planning coordination, cooperation and communication to avoid potential conflict between plans and partners ensuring Gloucestershire can speak with 'one voice', which is so important for Government dialogue and associated funding bids.

4.0 SCG DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

4.1 The Leaders Board has concluded that, given the importance of this partnership work, all the individual Local Authorities and GFirst LEP should be asked to approve the principles of this planning partnership work as set out in this report at the outset of the project. This report therefore is being presented to all Gloucestershire authorities and GFirst LEP for consideration within the meeting cycles for February and March 2019.

4.2 This project is in its earliest stages; therefore, this report concerns the principles of this project only and much further detail will need to be developed as the project progresses. As work on this project progresses Members will be updated. Further reports will be presented to individual local authorities and GFirst LEP as further decisions are required. Final adoption of the SCG for Gloucestershire will need to be agreed by each constituent authority.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 The SCG will be subject to a level of consultation which will need to be in accordance with the Statements of Community Involvement of each constituent local authority.

6.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

6.1 Joint Core Strategy.
Tewkesbury Borough Plan.

7.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

7.1 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
Localism Act 2011.
Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
Housing and Planning Act 2016.
National Planning Policy Framework.
National Planning Practice Guidance.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

8.1 Officer time will be required to support the preparation of the SCG as part of a regular programme of work.

9.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

9.1 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Planning decisions are required to be made in accordance with an adopted Development Plan. The Plan-led approach to development will help ensure that new development is supported by the necessary facilities and infrastructure to make it sustainable in the long term.

10.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

10.1 None as a direct result of this report. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the Sustainability Appraisal process for individual statutory planning documents.

11.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

11.1 None.

Background Papers: None.

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Appendices: 1 – Gloucestershire Strategic Planning Governance Structure.