

**Stroud District Local Plan Review (2020-2040)**  
**STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT MATTERS STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND**

**between**

**Cheltenham Borough Council  
Cotswold District Council  
Forest of Dean District Council  
Gloucester City Council  
Stroud District Council  
Tewkesbury Borough Council  
GFirstLEP**

**February 2023**

**1. Introduction and background**

- 1.1 A Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground (GSoCG) covering agreements on various strategic planning matters has been prepared and approved by the seven local authorities in Gloucestershire and GFirstLEP. The GSoCG provides for additional or supplementary Statements of Common Ground to be prepared by participating local authorities, particularly within the context of emerging local plans.
- 1.2 This additional Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) covering strategic employment matters has been prepared to support the examination of the Stroud District Local Plan Review (2020-2040), and has been signed by Cheltenham Borough Council, Cotswold District Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucester City Council, Stroud District Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council and GFirstLEP, referred to hereafter as ‘the parties’. Cheltenham Borough Council, Gloucester City Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council were previously known as the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) authorities and are now collectively known as the ‘Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) authorities’.

**2. Strategic matters that are agreed**

***Context and actions taken to date***

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires strategic policies relating to the economy and employment to “set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration” (NPPF, para. 82) and to be the result of effective engagement with relevant bodies including Local Enterprise Partnerships (NPPF, para. 25).
- 2.2 GFirst LEP is the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), set up by Government in 2011, that covers the county. The LEP’s role is to provide strategic economic leadership for their areas, bringing public and private sector partners and their resources together around a common set of goals, determining local economic priorities to drive economic growth and the creation of local jobs.
- 2.3 The boundaries of the GFirstLEP area coincide exactly with the administrative boundaries of Gloucestershire and this has enabled a high degree of integration between the LEP and the

Gloucestershire authorities. The GFirst LEP Board includes the Leader of Gloucestershire County Council and Stroud District Council (representing the 2nd tier authorities in the area). In 2014 a Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC) was established as a statutory joint committee made up of the seven Gloucestershire Councils, to provide the formal link between local government and the LEP Board, providing a mechanism for collective and binding decisions between councils and for local democratic oversight of the use of the local growth fund.

- 2.4 The parties have input positively into the contents of both the GFirstLEP produced Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)(2014 and 2018) and the draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) (2019) and Stroud District Council has used these documents to develop the Local Plan development strategy.
- 2.5 The SEP aims to provide good quality space in areas of good connectivity for businesses. The M5 corridor is identified as a Growth Zone, with sites close to motorway junctions identified as having the potential to deliver employment land attractive to new businesses and to create opportunities for existing businesses to grow. The aim is to realise the potential of this opportunity by operating a fast-track planning process; by ensuring the right infrastructure in proximity to the sites; and by exerting influence over the type of employment to be created within these locations.
- 2.6 The LIS sets out the LEP's strategy to boost economic productivity in Gloucestershire and to guide funding investments made through both the LEP and other national schemes. The LEP's ambition through this strategy is to promote Gloucestershire as a "magnet county" able to successfully attract and retain talent in the region. The LIS identifies Gloucestershire's particular focus for growth surrounding its existing industrial strengths including: advanced manufacturing and engineering; aerospace; agri-tech; cyber-tech; and green growth. To underpin this strategy, the LIS sets out the importance of investing in people in order to attract and retain a talented workforce and realise the regions ambition as a 'magnet county'. A particular issue Gloucestershire faces is its ageing population and the strategy therefore looks at various ways to retain and attract young people. Another important element of this strategy covers the need to improve connectivity across the region, considering investment in cycle links, rail projects and becoming a pilot for innovative technology driven transport solutions and high-quality digital infrastructure.
- 2.7 The principal duty to co-operate issue surrounding the economy and employment within Gloucestershire is how the local authorities can work together to deliver the clear vision and strategy established by the SEP and more recently articulated by the emerging LIS to the benefit of Gloucestershire as a whole.
- 2.8 In 2019 the six local planning authorities and Gloucestershire County Council jointly commissioned an Economic Needs Assessment (ENA) for Gloucestershire. This ENA provides a high-level assessment of the Gloucestershire economy, investigating the economic potential of Gloucestershire and identifying realistic yet aspirational growth scenarios based on economic forecasts and modelled scenarios for the delivery of employment land (B class uses).
- 2.9 The ENA concludes that on the balance of evidence, and adopting a 'best fit' approach to local authority boundaries, the six Gloucestershire districts can be considered to form a single functional economic market area (FEMA). The ENA provides a baseline assessment of the local and regional economic dynamics in Gloucestershire and examines the local

commercial property markets to set out requirements by sector and geographical area. An extensive examination of economic forecasts and policy drivers leads to the development of a number of labour demand and labour supply scenarios to establish future employment land requirements.

- 2.10 In preparing the Pre-Submission Stroud District Local Plan, the Council has sought to reflect the growth aspirations of the GFirstLEP by seeking to meet two of the highest scenarios for employment land based upon the expected labour supply and a labour demand growth scenario based on supporting growth in the key LIS sectors. To support the key LIS sectors, the Plan identifies six key segments of market demand set out in the ENA and the development strategy and strategic allocations seek to deliver on these requirements.
- 2.11 GFirstLEP did not make representations at the Stroud District Local Plan Regulation 19 stage but the GFirstLEP's Construction and Infrastructure Business Group did respond to the 2019 Draft Plan Regulation 18 stage to state that the employment strategy was supported by the LEP and that "The Local Plan is considered to provide a good range and distribution of employment sites across the District that should help diversify the employment needs of the District and meet future employment trends." (GFirstLEP Reg.18 response April 2020)
- 2.12 The JCS authorities have supported the Stroud District Local Plan approach towards the economy and employment land in their Regulation 19 response, stating that the strategy aligns with the strategy of the adopted JCS, the aspirations of the SEP and the emerging LIS.
- 2.13 Cotswold District Council and Forest of Dean District Council did not make representations at the Stroud District Local Plan Regulation 19 stage and have not identified any issues with the Stroud District Local Plan relating to strategic employment matters.

***Commitments for future work and collaboration***

- 2.14 The JSP authorities have raised in their Regulation 19 response the potential for the proposed employment land supply in Stroud District to address any unmet Gloucester/JCS needs, should they be required and in accordance with the JCS Review (JCS Reg.19 response para. 30).
- 2.15 No shortfall of employment land is identified in the adopted JCS and, given the stage of the JSP, it has not been possible to establish if there is a shortfall of employment land for that plan period. Consequently, Stroud District Council, in preparing the Stroud District Local Plan, has not identified a requirement in the Local Plan to address any unmet needs.
- 2.16 However, Stroud District Council is mindful of its duties and responsibilities and is willing to work with the JCS authorities through the JCS Review to examine whether there is likely to be a shortfall in employment land provision requiring authorities within the FEMA to assist.
- 2.17 In the event that the scale of unmet employment needs may require the allocation of other sites in adjoining local authority areas, the parties will commission jointly an assessment of the relevant sustainability of all reasonable alternative site options within the context of the latest adopted and emerging local plans framework and will seek to allocate the most sustainable form of development through the relevant local plan review process.

- 2.18 As mentioned in paragraph 1.2, the JCS is now called the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Strategic Plan (JSP). Rather than a partial review, the scope of the review will be comprehensive and provide a full review/replacement of the plan.
- 2.19 The next stage in the JSP process is a Regulation 18 document, which will be published later in the year for public and stakeholder consultation. The document will consider growth options (how much development) and spatial options (the strategy for delivering growth in the most sustainable way) and other matters. Amongst other evidence documents, it will be accompanied by Urban Capacity Studies for Gloucester City and Cheltenham Borough, which will identify how much growth can realistically be accommodated in the administrative areas of these local authority areas. It is also necessary for the JSP authorities to update their Local Development Schemes, which will take place in the summer.
- 2.20 The parties agree that Stroud District Council, in preparing the Stroud District Local Plan Review (2020-2040), has engaged proactively and positively with neighbouring authorities and GFirstLEP on strategic planning matters relating to employment through the Duty to Cooperate.

**3. Matters that are not agreed**

3.1 None

**4. Signatories**

Signed on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council

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Signed on behalf of Cotswold District Council

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Signed on behalf of Forest of Dean District Council

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Signed on behalf of Gloucester City Council

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Signed on behalf of Stroud District Council

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Signed on behalf of Tewkesbury Borough Council

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Signed on behalf of GFirstLEP

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Dated

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