

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet – 21st September 2010

Gloucester, Cheltenham & Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy

Accountable member	Cllr Jordan
Accountable officer	Tracey Crews – Spatial Planning Manager Cheltenham & Tewkesbury
Accountable scrutiny committee	Environment
Ward(s) affected	All

Executive summary All regional spatial strategies were revoked by the Coalition Government on 27th May 2010. For the JCS area, the impact of this is the creation of a policy vacuum as a result of the removal of strategic requirements for housing and employment.

In response to this policy vacuum the JCS authorities are committed to putting in place a Joint Core Strategy as quickly as possible in a manner that builds in local population and economic projections together with public consultation.

The JCS will be strategically focussed, agreeing levels of development required across the JCS area together with the identification of broad locations for growth. This will include strategic policies in areas where there are strategic policy gaps and be supported by more detailed development management policies in other supporting development plan documents. The JCS will also include a detailed infrastructure plan which may be supported by a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) requirement. CIL will require a separate process and examination to the JCS.

In advance of the JCS saved policies of Gloucestershire Structure Plan and Local Plan policies maintain their status as the development plans for the JCS area. These policies support the redevelopment of previously developed sites and have a presumption against development in the green belt.

- Recommendations**
- 1. Approve revised role and function of Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy as recommended by Joint Core Strategy Cross Boundary Programme Board and Member Steering Group as set out in paragraphs 1.4 -1.7 of this report.**
 - 2. Agree format of Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy as set out in appendix 1.**
 - 3. Agree the indicative timetable set out in this report and that a detailed work programme and consultation schedule be prepared.**

Financial implications	Each of the three authorities have agreed to fund £60,000 into the Joint Core Strategy for 2010/11. Cheltenham's contribution is to be met from existing resources within the Strategic Planning budget and from the Local Plan reserve for which this is earmarked for. Contact officer: sarah.didcote@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 264125
Legal implications	Cheltenham borough council is in the process of replacing its local plan with a set of new planning documents known collectively as the Local Development Framework (LDF). The most important part of the LDF is the core strategy which sets out the overall strategy for growth in cheltenham. In 2008 Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury councils agreed they would prepare a joint strategy for their combined areas. The cabinet is responsible for preparing alterations to the local plan and for submitting them to full council for adoption. Contact officer: jonathan.noel@tewkesbury.gov.uk, 01242 775117
HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	None.
Key risks	See attached risks at appendix 2.
Corporate and community plan Implications	The JCS is the spatial planning document which supports delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategies. The Council has already identified the development of the JCS as one of its strategic priorities as set out in its business plan.

1. Background

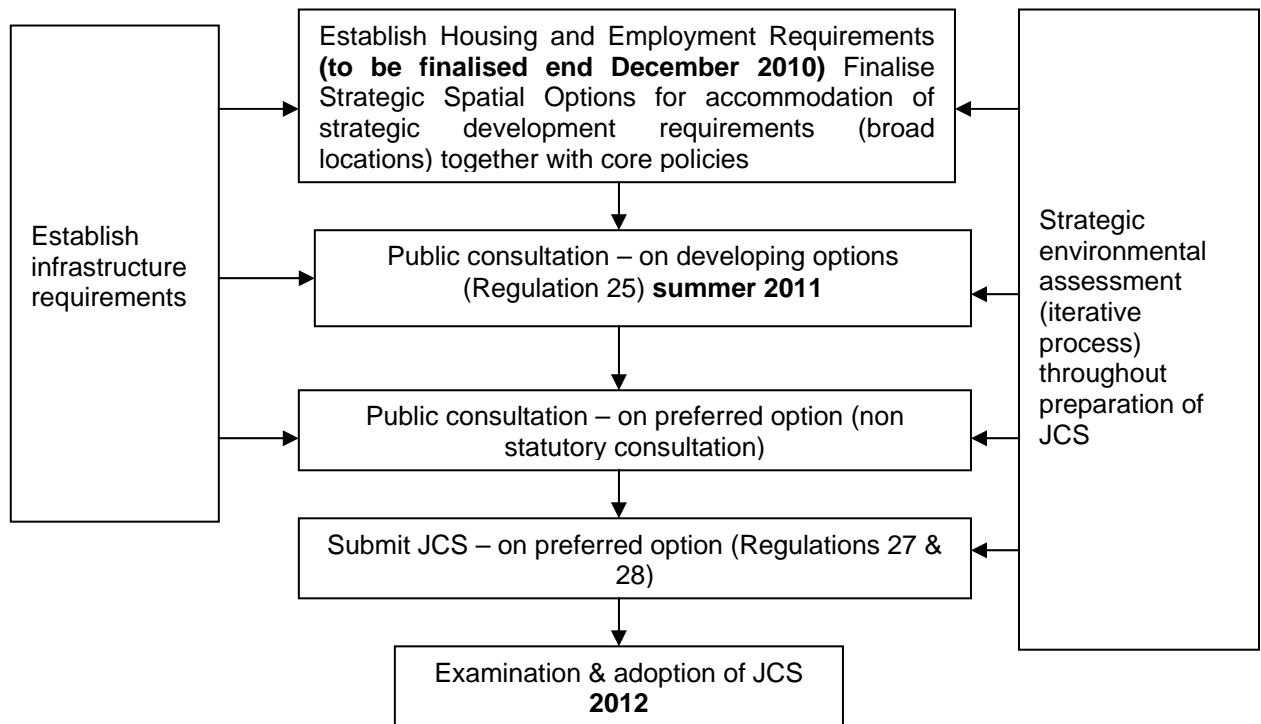
- 1.1** On 27th May the Secretary of State; the Rt Hon Eric Pickles wrote to all local authorities stating the intention of the coalition government to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies and give the responsibility for determining local housing requirements to them. While the letter did not abolish the RSS process at that point, it did state that local planning authorities should consider it as a material consideration in decision making.
- 1.2** On the 6th July a further letter from DCLG confirmed that Regional Strategies "have been revoked with immediate effect". The effect of this letter is that the revocation of RSS has been undertaken in accordance with primary legislation and therefore the RSS for the South West no longer exists as part of the development plan. It is important to note that primary legislation is required in order to abolish the RSS; this will occur via the Localism Bill, proposals for this are expected in the autumn of 2010.
- 1.3** The issues arising from the revocation of the RSS have been carefully considered across the 3 JCS authorities including;
- Meeting of Chief Executives and Leaders on 24th June 2010;
 - Joint Core Strategy Cross Boundary Programme Board on 21st July 2010 and
 - Joint Core Strategy Member Steering Group on 4th August and 1st September 2010.
- 1.4** Following consideration of papers setting out a range of options, it was agreed that the preferred way forward would be for the JCS to replace the strategic void left by the abolition of the RSS. This would require the JCS to primarily focus on setting out strategic housing and employment requirements for the JCS area and identify broad locations for growth. These will be illustrated as areas of search on a key diagram. The analysis to inform this would derive from up to date population, household and economic projections considered within a JCS and wider

Gloucestershire context along with a comprehensive review of development opportunities around the urban and rural locations.

- 1.5** Initial work has been undertaken by Gloucestershire County Council in preparing local population projections, these projections are available to view via the Joint Core Strategy website www.gct-jcs.org. Debate via the JCS Cross Boundary Programme Board on 21st July 2010 and JCS Member Steering Group on 4th August 2010 agreed that the provision of a strategic context would place the authorities in a stronger position to lead the debate on development requirements rather than responding simply to uncoordinated planning by appeal. Detailed work on identifying locally derived projections has now started. This work is being undertaken collaboratively with all districts of Gloucestershire supported by Gloucestershire County Council. It is expected that this work will be completed by the end of 2011.
- 1.6** Whilst it is accepted that more detailed policies are required to support the plan led approach to the JCS area, it was agreed that these should not be contained within a strategic JCS document. Detailed site specific and development management policies will be included within other development plan documents prepared outside the JCS. It is therefore appropriate for the authorities to consider individually the format and structure of their development plan beneath the JCS, whether there is scope for further collaborative working and prioritise documents accordingly. The timing for the preparation of further development plan documents and supplementary planning documents should reflect the need for such policies to be in place and the resourcing requirements of the JCS.
- 1.7** With this in mind however, it was agreed that policies on key issues would be required alongside the identification of strategic development requirements; including strategic policies for affordable housing, criteria for the location of suitable sites for gypsies, travellers and travelling show people, principles for Green Belt release and infrastructure provision. The broad timetable for the preparation and consultation of these policies is set out in paragraph 2.3. In advance of these policies being brought forward via the JCS; saved policies of Gloucestershire Structure Plan and Local Plan policies maintain their status as the development plans for the JCS area. These policies support the redevelopment of previously developed sites and have a presumption against development in the green belt.

2. Reasons for recommendations

- 2.1** Following the revocation of the RSS, the JCS authorities considered 3 options for putting in place core strategies as outlined by the Secretary of State. These options included;
- 1.** Accept the development requirements in the “Draft RSS Option 1” and prepare core strategies accordingly.
 - 2.** Accept the development requirements in the “Secretary of State’s Proposed Changes to the RSS” and prepare core strategies accordingly.
 - 3.** Review development requirements locally, and prepare core strategies accordingly.
- 2.2** The JCS authorities are in agreement that the way forward is option 3 and are working collaboratively with all Gloucestershire districts together with Gloucestershire County Council to develop an agreed methodology for locally derived strategic housing and employment projections.
- 2.3** Taking into account the need to deliver revised housing and employment projections the timetable for delivering the JCS needs to be reviewed. Set out below is an indicative timetable.



3. Alternative options considered

3.1 Discussion has been ongoing with the Chief Executives and Leaders of the JCS authorities together with the JCS Cross Boundary Programme Board and Member Steering Group following the revocation of the RSS and its implications on the JCS. Alternative options considered as a response to the policy void left by the revocation of the RSS included preparing;

1. a strategic plan;
2. a strategic plan incorporating key strategic policies;
3. a core strategy; or
4. a detailed core strategy

3.2 Following debate on each of the options set out above it was agreed that option 2 was the most appropriate way forward. Following a meeting of the JCS Member Steering Group on 4th August 2010 members agreed to “support the development of a strategically focussed JCS building in local projections and local consultations”, officers were tasked in working this format of the JCS up in more detail for consideration by Cheltenham Borough Cabinet (21st September), Gloucester City Planning Policy Sub Committee (30th September) and Tewkesbury Executive Committee (6th October).

4. Consultation and feedback

4.1 Dialogue has been ongoing via the JCS Cross Boundary Programme Board and JCS Member Steering Group. Member seminars and informal briefings have been provided to members across the JCS area as appropriate.

5. Performance management –monitoring and review

5.1 The JCS programme and its individual projects are managed by the JCS Cross Boundary Programme Board. Regular reporting takes place to Cheltenham’s Operational Programme Board.

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Appendices :

1. Proposed format of Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy
2. Risk assessment

Background information:

N/A

Appendix 1: Proposed format of Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core

Strategy

Introduction

Work has already been significantly undertaken in developing the JCS, the revised format does not seek to start again, but build upon the technical work already prepared and commissioned together with the outcomes arising from public consultation during 2009/10.

Consultation to date

Stakeholder and public consultation to date has been extensive including;

- consultation with key stakeholders via JCS Cross Boundary Programme Board, Member Steering Group and Policy Advisory Group
- Seminars within individual authorities to elected members
- Publication of consultation report on JCS Issues and Key Questions <http://www.gct-ics.org/PublicConsultation/IssuesandQuestionsConsultation.aspx>
- Consultation with parish councils across the JCS area (February – March 2010)
- Publication of consultation report on JCS Issues and Key Questions (November 2009 – February 2010) <http://www.gct-ics.org/Documents/PublicConsultation/IssuesandQuestions0910/FINALJCSDocument121109.pdf>
- Stakeholder events on developing the JCS Spatial Options (June 2010) with Local Strategic Partnerships, elected members and key stakeholders
- Consultation with parish councils directly affected by RSS proposals (May – July 2010)
- Publication of consultation report on JCS stakeholder consultation – <http://www.gct-ics.org/PublicConsultation/IssuesandQuestionsConsultation.aspx>
- Informal consultation between 14th June – 9 August on JCS Part 1 (incorporating spatial portrait, strategic objectives, key issues and vision for the JCS area) <http://www.gct-ics.org/Documents/PublicConsultation/Part10610/JCSPart1June10.pdf>

Part 1 – Agreeing the vision and objectives for the JCS

Revise the spatial portrait, strategic objectives, key issues and vision for the JCS area, taking account of all consultation activities undertaken between November 2009 and August 2010.

Part 2 – Strategic policies

This is the bulk of the work required. This part of the JCS will now contain less detail than originally proposed in 2009 focussing on 5 strategic elements;

1. **Identification of strategic development requirements for the JCS area – this will require the commissioning of statistical analysis of the most current population and economic projections.**

Tasks:

- a. all policies saved in 2009 are saved until such a time as they are replaced by the JCS or supporting development plan documents. Ensure all websites are updated to provide signposting to users to all relevant planning guidance and policies.

- b. agree methodology and timetable for preparing housing and employment projections across JCS area in co-operation with other Gloucestershire districts.
- c. commission projections and align where possible with existing evidence base, for example housing needs study, strategic housing market assessment.
- d. analyse projections within the context of the JCS area.
- e. develop JCS spatial options around achieving economic resilience, achieving resilience to climate change and achieving stronger communities.
- f. test projections against the emerging JCS spatial options.

2. Based upon the outputs of the identification of strategic development requirements for the JCS area identify broad locations for accommodating development needs.

Tasks:

- a. programme in the work required to address gaps in the JCS evidence base, including JCS green belt review, landscape assessment and retail study.
- b. identify deliverable capacity within urban areas, particularly focussing on delivery via GHURC, Cheltenham Taskforce and Tewkesbury Town Centre Masterplan – utilising findings of technical work including, strategic housing land availability assessments, monitoring data, employment land review, retail study, strategic flood risk assessment, comparative site assessment, sustainability appraisal.
- c. identify extent of strategic development that cannot be accommodated within key urban areas and undertake a comprehensive review of all peripheral areas of Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury along with the rural areas to identify a range of options for accommodating growth which cannot be accommodated within existing urban areas. This should draw together the findings of technical work including green belt review, landscape assessment, green infrastructure, strategic flood risk assessment, settlement audit, comparative site assessments, urban extension boundary definition study, outputs from consultation reports and emerging sustainability appraisal. Detailed public consultation will be integral to the development of options for broad locations.
- d. development of preferred spatial strategy including locations for development outside existing urban boundaries.
- e. preparation of strategic delivery plan, identifying broad phasing of brownfield/greenfield, essential strategic infrastructure and strategic desirable infrastructure requirements.
- f. identify a clear schedule and timetable for preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents or Area Actions Plans for each identified broad location for growth and include as a project within JCS programme.

3. Identification of core strategic policies including; affordable housing, criteria for the location of suitable sites for gypsies, travellers and travelling show people, definition of JCS green belt boundary and infrastructure, based upon available evidence base.

Tasks:

- a. review all available evidence bases and identify core principles relevant to core strategic policies

- b. review draft RSS and identify relevant strategic policies
- c. identify range of policies excluded from the JCS, but which need to be addressed in supporting development plan documents

4. Programme of consultation which provides a clear forward plan of activities which enables key stakeholders and communities to engage in each of the stages set out above. The JCS has committed resources via a consultation group to develop this programme.

- a. identify communities to engage across the JCS area and the best mechanisms in which to engage them. This should include communities within both urban areas and rural settlements.
- b. review the implications of the expected Localism Bill this Autumn and revise engagement processes in accordance with this along with any other subsequent Government publications and/or announcements.

5. Develop a delivery programme for the JCS.

- a. commence early work on developing a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for the JCS area and associated Infrastructure Delivery Plan on the understanding that the Government is favouring the retention of CIL and that legislation and regulations are now in place. Establish a JCS project and Senior Responsible Officer through the JCS Cross Boundary Programme Board for CIL along with a programme and timescale for its preparation. This will have additional resource implications outside of the JCS.
- b. develop and support SIDP into Phase 3 in association with the development of strategic options and a preferred approach.
- c. establish strategic and cross boundary infrastructure requirements and develop mechanisms for its implementation and funding arrangements.
- d. establish a JCS project and Senior Responsible Officer for major applications and strategic options arising in advance of the JCS as they are identified.
- e. on publication of the Localism Bill in the Autumn; commence discussions on cross boundary tax incentive funding as part of the Government's proposals to incentivise house building.