

Appendix 3 – Possible draft Cheltenham Borough Council response to the Gloucestershire 2050 big conversation

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Gloucestershire 2050 big conversation consultation. This response is sent on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council, following discussion and agreement at its meeting on 23rd July.

The Council welcomes and supports the aim of developing a long-term vision for Gloucestershire, and has taken a keen interest in the Gloucestershire 2050 Big Conversation.

As well as engaging internally with councillors and officers, we have also worked with local organisations to encourage them to engage in the big conversation and to express their views. This response captures where possible the views they have expressed back to us.

In summary, key messages from CBC are as follows

Overall

The council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Big Conversation and the challenge of looking to the future beyond our normal planning timescales. The council also values the opportunity to collaborate on a shared vision for the county. We share the view that it is an important aim to prevent the projected net loss of young people from the county. It is equally important to any suggested projects against the actual likelihood of achieving that.

The council requests that more efforts are made to capture the voices of young people in the next iteration of the Gloucestershire 2050 big conversation. We need to hear their views on how we create the conditions that will retain them in the future.

The council believes strongly in the concept that form follows function and it therefore requests that the Gloucestershire 2050 partners spend more time on developing its strategic outcomes before focusing on delivery models. Whatever delivery models are developed, need to reflect this council's democratic mandate.

Strategic alignment

The council believes it is important that ideas stemming from Gloucestershire 2050 should build on our own agreed plans and policies – with particular emphasis given to the Joint Core Strategy and Cheltenham's place vision. CBC therefore requests that future project ideas respect the agreed development framework up to 2031. The JCS embraces a commitment to sustainable growth with plans for 35,000 new homes and 192 ha of new employment land supporting 39,500 new jobs. The JCS focuses development in and around Gloucester and Cheltenham, including urban extensions to these areas, but retains the green belt boundary between Cheltenham and Gloucester to prevent any physical merger of the two areas.

JCS partners are now starting to think beyond 2031 and we feel that there is an opportunity for JCS mark 2 to set out a democratically agreed vision for the future of the Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, Gloucester area that may well be informed by the feedback from the Gloucestershire 2050 big conversation.

Cheltenham's place vision sets out very clearly the challenges that Cheltenham is facing:

- The need to create a thriving Cheltenham within a thriving county building on our complementarity with Gloucester
- The need to increase economic productivity and job growth and increasing employment opportunities for all
- The need to deliver more affordable, accessible, safe and secure housing
- The need to promote ourselves as a world class visitor and cultural capital.
- The need to improve the life chances of residents living in our most deprived communities and outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people
- The need to support, attract and retain young people

To respond to these challenges, the council and its partners have developed the vision that Cheltenham is a place where everyone thrives and which emphasises our efforts to work inclusively to ensure that all our residents and businesses have the opportunity to benefit from the growth set out in the JCS.

Our vision also recognises that Cheltenham's longer-term success is predicated on having thriving businesses and workforces, a thriving cultural and creativity sector and offer, and that all our people and communities thrive.

It recognises that to attract and retain young people more joined-up effort is needed on ensuring young people can access housing that is affordable, that there is inspiring education and skills provision, that there are vibrant cultural and sporting opportunities and that there are sufficient jobs and career opportunities.

We therefore feel that the next iteration of Gloucestershire 2050 should more clearly set out how its proposals will help address our challenges and help us deliver our vision.

The eight ambitions

The council feel that the eight ambitions are all worthwhile and align with the values the council and its partners have agreed to in its place vision. We note the suggestion from Vision 21 that the "sustainable county" ambition could be more explicit in its view that the county could be a "low carbon economy"

The six projects

The council recognises that the six project ideas are provocations to prompt debate and discussion but remains underwhelmed by the emphasis on big capital infrastructure projects rather than taking the opportunity to think really creatively about projects that will embody the 8 ambitions and that reflect the principles of sustainable development.

Cyber-Park: The council is supportive of the Cyber-park project idea recognising the transformational impact its successful implementation will have on Cheltenham and the wider county and the fact that the proposal aligns with the JCS and place vision. However, success implementation is predicated on two key elements that the council wishes to emphasise:

- The absolute requirement for investment into sustainable transport infrastructure and digital connectivity. Enabling 4-way working at junction 10 is seen by the council as an absolute requirement to prevent a substantial increase of traffic onto residential roads. But this needs to be complemented by investment into sustainable travel to improve walking, cycling, public transport connections to the cyber-park.

- The need to put in place education and skills pathways, starting in primary schools, but also encompassing our FE and HE provision to ensure we are inspiring and preparing our young people for the potential that cyber and digital industries can offer.

Super-city: The council is not supportive of the super-city project idea particularly the suggestion of a third centre. This does not align with our JCS. The council is supportive of greater collaboration with JCS partners to achieve a democratically agreed vision for the longer-term future of Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury beyond 2031. The council support this vision being based on:

- Increased connectivity; both in terms of sustainable travel and digital connectivity
- Enabling a vibrant cultural and sporting offer
- Democratic leadership
- Being inclusive and ensuring that investment benefits those that are most disadvantaged.
- Based on research learning from Europe's most successful cities about what makes a thriving urban area

Cotswolds Airport: The council is not supportive of the idea to create a new airport. The council feels that investment should be made into Gloucestershire airport in order that it can benefit from new aviation technologies.

Lydney – Sharpness: The council supports idea of a multi-purpose crossing at this point. This would enable significant development for both homes and employment which would probably be important since a new bridge would be a major cost.

Cotswold Waterpark & Regional Parks: The council supports the use of the natural environment across the county as a means to further enhance the tourism offer.

Summary

The council looks forward to working with all of its partners and communities to help refine and take forward delivery of the Vision 2050.