

RIDGE

GREEN TECHNOLOGY CLUSTER:
JUSTIFICATION OF NEED
LAND AT M5 JUNCTION 13
October 2020

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Prepared for

Ecotricity Group Limited

Prepared by

Ridge and Partners LLP
Thornbury House
18 High Street
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
Tel: 01242 230066

Contact

Jenny Henderson
Senior Planner

Paul Fong
Partner

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. PLANNING POLICY	4
Adopted Stroud District Local Plan	4
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	4
Stroud District Local Plan Review: Draft Plan for Consultation	5
3. GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC STRATEGIES	8
Strategic Economic Plan for Gloucestershire March 2014, GFirst LEP	8
Gfirst LEP Strategic Economic Plan for Gloucestershire 2.0, 2018	8
Gloucestershire Local Industrial Strategy Draft 2019, Gfirst LEP	9
4. EMPLOYMENT NEED	10
Stroud Local Plan Review	10
Gloucestershire Economic Needs Assessment (August 2020)	10
5. ECO-PARK PROPOSALS	15
Eco-Park Concept	15
The Green Technology Cluster	15
Meeting Policy and Economic Aspirations	16
6. CONCLUSION	18

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Assessment has been prepared by Ridge and Partners LLP on behalf of Ecotricity Group Limited, in order to provide an assessment of the background evidence base of employment need in Stroud District, in support the proposals for a Green Technology Cluster as part of the Eco-Park proposals at M5 Junction 13.
- 1.2 The proposals are for mixed-use development driven by the proposed Green Technology Cluster, as well as providing a stadium and training facilities for Forest Green Rovers Football Club, a hotel, and Care Village.
- 1.3 This assessment provides an assessment of planning policy, as well as economic aspirations for Stroud District and Gloucestershire. It then reviews the proposals for the Eco-Park, identifying key concepts proposed, as well as how this contributes towards the needs identified.

2. PLANNING POLICY

Adopted Stroud District Local Plan

2.1 The adopted Local Plan identifies a number of issues associated with the economy of the District. In terms of 'providing for job opportunities across the District', paragraphs 39-49 includes:

- high levels of daily commuting out of and into the District, but overall, there is a significant net outflow of people working in larger centres like Bristol, Gloucester, Cheltenham and Swindon.
- District needs to attract more knowledge-based industries, enabling greater employment opportunities for the highly skilled and well qualified working population.
- Improved access is required to land and premises, particularly to the east of the District.
- There is an issue of quality of employment stock in the District. Stroud District lacks, in particular, modern office premises with business support services and freehold small industrial sites.
- A large proportion of the District's current protected employment land lies along the valley bottoms to the east, west and south of Stroud, where sites are constrained, and transport and infrastructure are inconvenient for many traditional industries.
- Many of our current employment sites are on low-lying land, close to rivers; some are already flood-prone and future climate change may increase the risk.

2.2 In terms of the Development Strategy, the Local Plan highlights that National policy identifies a clear role for the planning system to support and not to act as an impediment to sustainable economic growth. Local plans should be proactive in meeting the development needs of business.

2.3 Paragraph 5.1 highlights that it is the broad aspiration of the Local Plan to provide two jobs for every new allocated house built. In seeking to address some of the District's employment trends and commuting imbalances, the Council will actively promote growth in the following sectors:- construction, distribution, retailing, computing services, hotel & catering, transport, professional services, other business services, health and social work, engineering, creative and 'green' industries.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2.4 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF outlines the Government's objective for the planning system to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development. Sustainable development is defined in paragraph 8 of the NPPF, and includes three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and

need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways; these being economic, social and environmental factors.

2.5 Chapter 6 is concerned with building a strong and competitive economy and Paragraph 80 states planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.

2.6 Paragraph 81 highlights that planning policies should:

- 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;
- set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;
- seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment; and
- be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

2.7 Paragraph 82 states planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries at a variety of scales and in suitable accessible locations.

Stroud District Local Plan Review: Draft Plan for Consultation

2.8 The Local Plan Review identifies a number of key issues in relation to creating a sustainable and vibrant economy that works for all, including:

- Continuing to provide for job opportunities across the District, with a focus on knowledge based industries, environmental technologies, engineering and manufacturing, creative industries and high quality social care.
- Rebalancing and regenerating the existing employment stock to secure modern office premises with business support services and freehold small industrial sites.

- Addressing the high level of daily commuting out of and into the District, particularly out commuting to Bristol, Gloucester, Cheltenham and Swindon.
- Working with other local authorities and statutory agencies to investigate transport improvements to link Stroud to Bristol, the Midlands and Wales.
- Responding to the requirements of the digital economy for superfast broadband connections and good coverage across the District, together with the implications for living and working patterns.
- Ensuring that the local economy can respond positively to challenges and any new trading opportunities following Brexit

2.9 Paragraph 2.66 notes that *'there is considerable out-commuting to work, which presents a big challenge if we are to reduce our District's carbon footprint: as a rural district, many people are car-dependent, so we also need to ensure that access to jobs, services and facilities can be improved in the future and our chosen strategy must enable more sustainable forms of transport to be used. In order to stem out- commuting Stroud will need to attract more knowledge-based industries, enabling greater employment opportunities for the highly skilled and well qualified working population. This suggests a need for the District to both increase and diversify its employment base, in order to provide local job opportunities appropriate to the workforce and to help reduce the number of people travelling to towns and cities beyond the District for work.'*

2.10 Paragraph 2.57 identifies that the emerging Local Industrial Strategy is likely to focus on the economy's strengths within manufacturing services for the advanced engineering sector, agriculture and food manufacturing and emerging opportunities within the Green sector for clean growth and for supporting Cyber-tech innovation.

2.11 The Draft Strategy highlights that the employment strategy seeks to deliver, amongst others:

- economic growth and additional jobs on and adjacent to existing high value employment sites and within the M5/A38/rail growth corridor
- new employment sites of varying sizes and locations to meet the specific locational requirements of different sectors, with particular support for green technology hubs
- support for affordable, low cost sites and premises with flexible terms for business start ups
- opportunities to foster on-going employment-education links
- new employment together with new housing to create sustainable communities and to reduce the potential for further out commuting

- 2.12 To meet the above, the draft local plan allocates a number of proposed sites for development. The site is allocated under PS20 'M5 Junction 13' for *“a strategic mixed use development, including 10 ha employment, sports stadium, sports pitches, canal and open space uses, together with strategic landscaping. Detailed policy criteria will be developed to highlight specific mitigation measures and infrastructure requirements and how development will prioritise walking, cycling and public transport over the use of the private car. A development brief incorporating an indicative masterplan, to be approved by the District Council, will detail the way in which the land uses and infrastructure will be developed in an integrated and co-ordinated manner”*
- 2.13 In terms of the Stonehouse Cluster more generally, the Draft Vision highlights *“Stonehouse is one of the District’s employment hotspots and, with its good rail and road links, it is well placed for future growth to meet the District’s strategic needs. Development to the west of Stonehouse at Great Oldbury will expand the existing Oldends/Stroudwater employment area, with attendant transport and infrastructure improvements – including improved links to the town centre and opportunities for all to make use of pleasant and safe ‘green links’ on foot or cycle. This will be a sustainable workplace destination for the District, as well as a vibrant new community, served by its own local centre. The growth of a new employment area close to the M5 Junction 13 will reinforce the town’s role as one of the District’s most important employment hubs.”*

3. GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC STRATEGIES

Strategic Economic Plan for Gloucestershire March 2014, GFirst LEP

- 3.1 The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) for Gloucestershire was adopted in March 2014 and provides an over-arching vision for economic growth in the County. The LEP acts as the voice of businesses in the county and a link between private, public and voluntary sectors.
- 3.2 The SEP aims to accelerate economic growth and address particular challenges faced in the County. Some of the challenges identified are how to support the growth of knowledge-intensive sectors, the need for innovation to be a stronger driver of productivity and how to capitalise on our entrepreneurial culture.
- 3.3 Whilst the SEP recognises that Gloucestershire has a diverse and resilient economy with particular expertise in renewable energy, it also recognises that some of the threats that the County currently face relate to the lack of suitable premises for high value businesses and an insufficient number of attractive development sites.
- 3.4 To address these threats the SEP has set a bold target for growth which is above the national average and in order to achieve this target has set out ambitious projects for growth.
- 3.5 One of these projects is establishing a 'Growth Zone' along the M5 corridor, the aim of which is:

"The primary aim of the Growth Zone is to ensure the availability of quality employment land in proximity to the M5 motorway attractive to business and with excellent connectivity throughout Gloucestershire and the rest of the UK. This will serve the latent demand in the market place and provide space required to enable Growth Hub supported business growth."

And

"Focused on the M5 motorway corridor, the Growth Zone will provide space for sustainable business expansion by ensuring the availability of employment land in the best locations in the county with the necessary transport infrastructure essential to attract and retain high value-added business."

Gfirst LEP Strategic Economic Plan for Gloucestershire 2.0, 2018

- 3.6 Gfirst LEP updated the SEP in 2018. Within that report, Gloucestershire is defined as having a *"prosperous and resilient economy set within a highly attractive natural environment."* It has seen economic growth since 2012, where its economy grew from £14.2 billion to £16.3 billion. Its workforce grew by 19,300 and the number of businesses by 3,980 between 2012 to 2017, totalling at 33,520 businesses, 344,000 jobs and a workforce of 319,800 in 2017. That growth is set to increase.
- 3.7 In terms of delivering the SEP, it states that the Growth Zone seeks to identify and secure the availability of quality employment land in proximity to the M5 motorway corridor that is attractive to

businesses and has excellent connectivity throughout Gloucestershire and to the rest of the UK. The importance of the M5 in this context remains as significant now as it was in the original SEP.

- 3.8 More specifically, Junction 13 is recognised as one of the key growth zones, highlighting the ‘Eco-Park’, as one of the key employment opportunities for that area. It is predicted the ‘Eco-park’ will generate in excess of 5,100 jobs excluding construction. It also identifies the improvements to the A419 as key to supporting access to the ‘GREEN centre’.

Gloucestershire Local Industrial Strategy Draft 2019, Gfirst LEP

- 3.9 Gloucestershire’s Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) identifies Gloucestershire’s strengths, opportunities and challenges. It sets a strategy to drive productivity and prosperity in Gloucestershire and support an inclusive economy. The emerging plan will play to the strengths, capabilities and skills of Gloucestershire’s employers, and highlight the business sectors we expect to make the greatest contribution to economic growth in the county by 2030.
- 3.10 One of the opportunities identified is to present Gloucestershire as *‘the greenest place to live and work in England’*. This includes putting clean growth at the heart of strategies for business growth, building on the capabilities of local green companies and attracting more, reducing carbon emissions to net zero by 2050. It goes on to state that Gloucestershire sees an opportunity to be the greenest place to live and work in England and a ‘magnet county’ championing natural capital-based growth, creative green business development opportunities, and reducing its carbon emissions to net zero by 2050 or sooner. By building on the Gloucestershire Sustainable Energy Strategy, the aim is to protect and improve the natural environment whilst at the same time exploiting the productivity improvements to be gained by businesses adopting greener approaches. Going green will not be a barrier to growth – it will enable Gloucestershire to engage in the renewable and clean energy market and provide opportunities for individual businesses to reduce energy consumption and save money to reinvest to improve productivity.
- 3.11 Reference is made to a ‘local green skills and business hub’ which states that *‘Ecotricity are also leading plans for a world-class low-carbon stadium and employment hub nearby at junction 13 of the M5. The Eco-Park will create up to 4,000 new jobs, with a focus on attracting companies from the growing green economy in Gloucestershire and beyond.’*
- 3.12 In terms of the ambition, page 38 states that *‘we want deliver a vibrant business and education offer at Berkeley Science and Technology Park, as a hub for future low-carbon technology innovators. This will work in tandem with a proposed future Eco-Park at junction 13 of the M5, creating a vibrant hub for green technology and skills in Stroud district.’*
- 3.13 The Local Industrial Strategy also 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’.

4. EMPLOYMENT NEED

Stroud Local Plan Review

- 4.1 The Stroud Local Plan Review identifies that the work on developing an economic and employment strategy for Gloucestershire is ongoing. Paragraph 2.52 identifies that the latest job forecasts for the District suggests the need to plan for between 2,300 and 6,300 net new jobs (2020-2040). It identifies that previous forecast models have suggested that the District has a significant oversupply of employment land to meet these requirements. However, it goes on to state that these models take no account of pent up demand, failures in the property market or the need for a range of sites and locations to provide for choice and a continuum of supply beyond the Plan period.
- 4.2 Paragraph 4.53 that further work is required to identify future land requirements. However, based upon past take up rates, there is a need to provide at least 50 ha of additional employment (B1-B8) land (2020 to 2040).

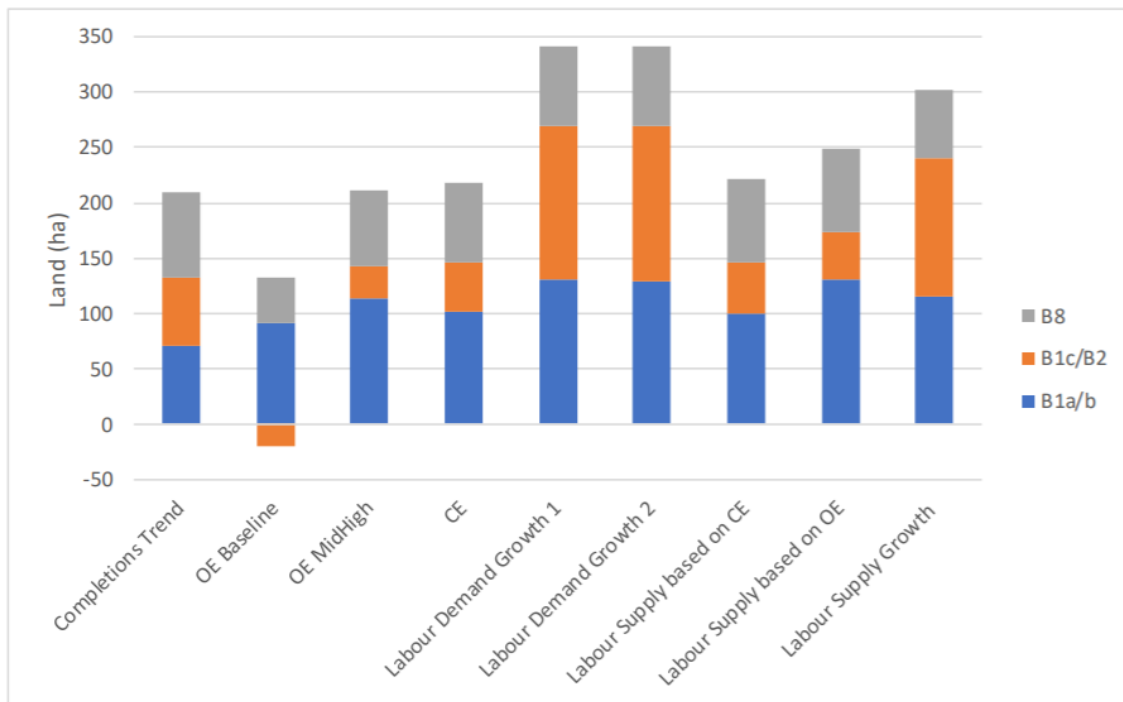
Gloucestershire Economic Needs Assessment (August 2020)

- 4.3 This Economic Needs Assessment (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).
- 4.4 A range of scenarios for estimating future employment land needs in Gloucestershire have been considered and developed. It assesses both a 'labour demand' and 'labour supply' scenario.
- 4.5 Two Labour Demand Growth Forecasts have been developed which seek to reflect the local drivers of growth in the Gloucestershire economy. This reflects the LEP's growth plans as set out in the Local Industrial Strategy and a range of feedback received from the stakeholder engagement.
- 4.6 Labour demand scenarios have been developed based on the three jobs forecasts: Cambridge Econometrics (CE), Oxford Economics (OE) Baseline and OE MidHigh. In addition, Growth Forecasts has been developed which seeks to reflect the local drivers of growth in the Gloucestershire economy. Growth Forecast 1 applies uplifts to the Manufacturing, Energy, and Information and communications sectors to reflect the trend of jobs growth in seen in each sector in each local authority over the past 10-year period. An alternative Growth Forecast 2 has also been developed where the additional jobs in Information and communications sector is met in Cheltenham to reflect the plans for the Cheltenham Cyber Technology Park.
- 4.7 The Labour Supply approach looks for alignment between future housing and employment land needs, and calculates the employment needs resulting the population growth as set out in the Gloucestershire Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA).

4.8 The number of jobs generated as a result of population growth has been used to estimate the level of employment land needed so as to ensure this level of growth is not constrained by a lack of land. The scenarios make differing assumptions regarding the sectoral composition of the identified level of jobs growth. In the CE based scenario and OE based scenario the increase in jobs has been calculated on the proportion of jobs growth in the growth sectors in each forecast. For the Labour Supply Growth Scenario, the composition of additional growth (i.e. that above the jobs growth shown in the CE forecast) reflects the LEP growth sectors. Overall, the CE based and OE based labour supply scenarios show a need for 221ha and 249ha of employment land across Gloucestershire respectively. The Labour Supply Growth Scenario shows a need for just over 300ha of employment land. The greater need for B Class land is due to a larger proportion of jobs being supported being in sectors requiring B class employment space – most notably in the manufacturing sector.

4.9 A comparison of the outputs for each of these scenarios for Gloucestershire is as follows:

Comparison of Employment Land Scenarios – Gloucestershire



4.10 In terms of analysing the above, the ENA goes on to state:

'The labour demand scenarios based on the OE and CE forecasts show growth well below the completions trend and includes a net negative need for industrial land. The OE MidHigh and the CE labour demand scenarios show a level of growth lower than any of the labour supply scenarios. This suggests that planning for this level of growth would likely constrain the employment demand arising from the demographic growth. The labour supply approach is therefore considered a more appropriate measure of future employment land needs.'

The labour supply scenarios based on the CE and OE forecasts identify very low future needs for industrial (B1c/B2) land – around 45ha across Gloucestershire, and only 7.5-12.5ha across the JCS area. This reflects the sectoral profile of growth in the CE and OE forecasts. However, these forecasts do not reflect the strong recent performance seen in key growth sectors of Advanced manufacturing, Energy, and Cyber security and related IT services. These sectors have all seen strong growth in Gloucestershire in recent years and were identified by many stakeholders as strong areas of growth. They are also priority sectors identified by the LEP’s Local Industrial Strategy.

The labour supply growth scenario is modelled on the assumption that the profile of jobs growth shown in the growth forecast which is based on the strong 10-year performance in the growth sectors. These sectors generally take place on B Class employment sites, and as such the higher jobs growth in these scenarios translates to considerably higher employment land requirements. This results in a need for 124ha of B1c/B2 industrial land across the FEMA. However, this is lower than the 140ha identified in the labour demand growth scenarios.

For B8 uses, the range between the scenarios is not as significant as for industrial uses, with the scenarios showing a need for 60-75ha of land across Gloucestershire, with the labour supply growth scenario at the lower end of this range. One of the key findings arising from the commercial property market assessment was that flexibility should be applied in terms of the uses permitted at employment sites and policies should not differentiate between B2 and B8 uses. Therefore, considering B2 and B8 requirements together, the labour supply growth scenario identifies a need for 185ha compared to the other labour supply scenarios which show a need for around 120ha.

For the office sector the range between the scenarios is not so significant, showing an overall need for office space ranging from 100-130ha across Gloucestershire. The labour supply growth scenario shows a need for 115ha – representing the mid-point of this range.’

- 4.11 It goes on to state that the labour supply growth scenario is considered to provide a realistic yet positive estimate for future employment land needs in Gloucestershire. It aligns with demographic growth and takes account of recent growth trends, stakeholder feedback, and the LEP’s Local industrial strategy. It is therefore considered to provide a positive basis for planning to ensure that future business needs of Gloucestershire are provided for. The labour demand growth scenario provides a slightly higher figure which would support the continued growth in key sectors of the Gloucestershire economy and support the aims of the GFirst LEP and Local Industrial Strategy.
- 4.12 The summary of employment needs for the above scenarios are as follows:

Employment Land Needs by Local Authority, 2021-41 (Stroud 2020-40)

Source	B1a/b		B1c/B2/B8	
	Labour Supply Growth	Labour Demand Growth 1	Labour Supply Growth	Labour Demand Growth 1
Cheltenham	22.9	26.2	15.4	17.6
Cotswold	19.7	23.5	24.6	28.6
Forest of Dean	3.1	2.9	19.3	19.0
Gloucester	31.1	33.7	19.2	19.9
Stroud	18.0	20.9	44.4	50.8
Tewkesbury	20.7	23.0	63.1	75.5
JCS Area	74.7	82.9	97.7	113.0
Gloucestershire	115.5	130.2	186.0	211.4

4.13 For Stroud, there is therefore an overall need of between 62.4ha and 71.7ha of B Class Employment Land, depending on the scenario chosen.

4.14 The Assessment goes on to note that *'in addition to the overall assessment of employment land set out above, the analysis has identified a range of other conclusions which should be considered when identifying the type, size, and location of sites for employment uses.'* These include the following:

- The M5 corridor is the key location for industrial and distribution occupiers in Gloucestershire. The M5 corridor is also popular for office occupiers along with Cheltenham Town Centre and Gloucester City Centre.
- Beyond the most popular locations, demand for land is predominantly driven by indigenous businesses requiring new or additional premises to support organic growth.
- A considerable driver of demand is the growth and expansion requirements of individual businesses, which is difficult to predict.
- One of the other main drivers for business growth or relocation to the area is the highly skilled workforce – particularly for technical manufacturing businesses. The primary reason for firms locating in the area is the highly skilled local labour force which is particularly focussed on high-tech manufacturing professions.
- There is a need for sites which are deliverable immediately or in the short term. This requires allocation of a range of site sizes.
- In terms of size requirements, there is an identified shortage of medium size units in the 25,000-40,000 sqft range, and there is a steady demand for smaller units of around 1,000-5,000 sqft in most areas. This means the demand for employment land will be to include smaller sites at the existing employment locations, close to the motorway junctions or strategic road network, and close to the existing workforce.

- Flexibility is important in order to meet business needs as they arise. This should be in terms of the scale of employment land, but also in terms of the types and locations of sites.
- Flexibility should be built into employment policies and allocations. Overly prescriptive policies which safeguard employment allocations for a certain type of employment use were not seen as effective and were considered to restrict growth. Out of town employment sites can benefit from a range of ancillary non-B Class uses to suit employee's needs.

5. ECO-PARK PROPOSALS

Eco-Park Concept

- 5.1 The Eco-Park is proposed to be a flagship mixed-use development at M5 Junction 13 providing 57,221 sqm/10 ha of employment land and creating some 4,000 jobs in Stroud District. At the heart of the Eco-Park concept is an aspiration to create an overtly low carbon development. To achieve this aim, the development will embrace innovative building design and construction; green infrastructure; utilise sustainable urban drainage (SuDs) and the adoption of best practice ecological management and enhancement.
- 5.2 The Masterplan includes the provision of a Green Technology Cluster which is proposed to be an exemplar business and commercial site. The business park will embrace sustainability and the need to respond to climate change through methods of construction, renewable energy, recycling and waste minimisation. The intention of Ecotricity is to attract likeminded companies on site from the zero-carbon economy who specialise in sustainable/green technologies and associated practices, creating a cluster of knowledge intensive businesses in one location.
- 5.3 The wider Eco-Park development includes the land to the north where permission has recently been granted for a 5,000 seater capacity football stadium for Forest Green Rovers Football Club. The wider Eco-Park also includes training facilities for Forest Green Rovers, a hotel and Care Village.

The Green Technology Cluster

- 5.4 The proposal for the Green Technology Cluster looks to complement the approved Stadium development as part of the wider Eco-Park proposals with contemporary buildings, creating clean lines and utilising modern construction techniques to create first class buildings for visitors and staff alike. Similarly, to the stadium design, the new buildings will embody environmentally friendly construction techniques, materials and services.
- 5.5 The principal benchmark used for the Green Technology Cluster will be BREEAM, which is an international scheme that provides independent third-party certification of the assessment of the sustainability performance of individual buildings, communities and infrastructure projects. It is an established method of assessing, rating, and certifying the sustainability of buildings. BREEAM measures sustainable value in a series of categories: energy, health and wellbeing, innovation, land use, materials, management, pollution, transport, waste and water. Each of these categories addresses the most influential factors, including low impact design and carbon emissions reduction; design durability and resilience; adaption to climate change; and ecological value and biodiversity protection.
- 5.6 The aim is to meet the BREEAM 'Excellent' rating, which can only be achieved if a score of 70% or above is met. This currently applies to the top 10% of UK new non-domestic buildings, and clearly

helps to demonstrate the aim of, over time, achieving a Carbon Neutral development which is innovative in its approach to sustainable construction and energy production.

5.7 As identified above, the Eco-Park aspires to be a cutting-edge sustainable development, employing the very best, innovative and most recent practices in green energy production with the aim of, over time, being carbon neutral. Measures include:

- Employing sustainable construction methods;
- Buildings will be designed to minimise operational energy demand, consumption and CO₂ emissions;
- Carbon neutral development including the provision of on-site renewable energy production;
- Promoting sustainable transport measures to promote accessibility of the site by public transport, walking, cycling and the use of electric vehicles;
- Establishing a robust Green Infrastructure incorporating the retention and ecological enhancements of mature hedgerows wherever possible within a parkland setting;
- Integration of ecological enhancements measures throughout the site, providing a biodiversity net gain; and
- Use of SuDs throughout the development.

Meeting Policy and Economic Aspirations

4.15 The adopted Local Plan identifies a number of key issues in the District, including out-commuting, and the lack of knowledge based industries. Both the adopted Local Plan and Draft Local Plan Review look to tackle these issues, and also specifically state that the District wishes to promote growth in the M5 Growth Zone and 'Green Industries' specifically.

4.16 The Stroud Local Plan Review identifies that the work on developing an economic and employment strategy for Gloucestershire is ongoing. It identifies that based upon past take up rates, there is a need to provide at least 50 ha of additional employment (B1-B8) land (2020 to 2040). However, Gloucestershire Economic Needs Assessment (August 2020) identifies that there is a need of between 62.4ha and 71.7ha of B Class Employment Land, depending on the scenario chosen. This is in excess of that identified within the Local Plan Review and accordingly it is likely that the Local Plan Review will be updated to account for this change.

4.17 The Emerging Local Plan Review does look to address this ongoing need and identifies significant employment land development, including the allocation of the site for 10ha employment land. The Masterplanning exercise has identified that the site can deliver 57,221 sqm of B-Class employment space. This will help meet the need identified in the Economic Needs Assessment and the emerging

Local Plan. In total, the proposed Eco-Park will deliver 3,115 direct jobs on site (which includes 2,916 within the Green Technology Cluster), with an additional 903 off-site jobs via occupier supply chain and employee expenditure, directly boosting the local and regional economy. In total the Eco-Park has the potential to deliver around 4,000 jobs for the County.

- 5.8 The proposed development helps to meet the overarching objectives of the Council in relation to provide a high-quality suitable premises in the Growth Zone, to promote green business development and grow knowledge-intensive sectors of the economy.
- 5.9 The proposal also looks to assist GFirst LEP's ambition for economic development within the Growth Zone, as well as the aspiration for Gloucestershire to be the greenest place to live and work in England, as set out within the Local Industrial Strategy. The Local Industrial Strategy highlights that Gloucestershire sees an opportunity to be the greenest place to live and work in England and a 'magnet county' championing natural capital-based growth, creative green business development opportunities, and reducing its carbon emissions to net zero by 2050 or sooner. The Industrial Strategy supports the proposed development, highlighting that *'Ecotricity are also leading plans for a world-class low-carbon stadium and employment hub nearby at junction 13 of the M5. The Eco-Park will create up to 4,000 new jobs, with a focus on attracting companies from the growing green economy in Gloucestershire and beyond.'*
- 5.10 Ecotricity has a track record of job creation within the County. The intention of Ecotricity is to attract likeminded companies to create a regionally significant cluster of companies from the 'green economy', either directly involved with manufacturing, supplying or developing sustainable products and services and/or companies wishing to reduce their own carbon footprint by occupying buildings specifically designed and constructed to stringent environmental standards.
- 5.11 Overall, the intention is for the Green Technology Hub to be an exemplar, carbon neutral development which will create a regionally important cluster of like-minded companies from the green economy in line with the aims and aspirations of achieving a carbon neutral agenda that is currently supported by GFirst LEP, the County Council as well as the District Council.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This Assessment has been prepared by Ridge and Partners LLP on behalf of Ecotricity Group Limited, in order to provide an assessment of the background evidence base of employment need in Stroud District, in order to support the proposals for a Green Technology Cluster as part of the Eco-Park proposals at M5 Junction 13.
- 6.2 The intention for the Green Technology Cluster to be an exemplar, carbon neutral development which will create a regionally important cluster of like-minded companies from the green economy.
- 6.3 The evidence base for the Local Plan Review identifies that there is a need to provide between 62.4ha and 71.7ha of B Class Employment Land, depending on the scenarios assessed within the Economic Needs Assessment. This is in excess of the 50ha of employment land identified in the Draft Local Plan Review and accordingly it is likely that the Local Plan Review will be updated to account for this change.. The Eco-Park site is allocated within the Draft Local Plan Review for employment, as well as other uses, to help meet this need.
- 6.4 The Green Technology Cluster will help to meet the need identified by the Council by providing 10ha of employment land, and 57,221 sqm of employment floorspace. This provides an opportunity to deliver a significant amount of new jobs. When combined with the other uses on site, the proposed Eco-Park will deliver 3,115 direct jobs on site, with an additional 903 off-site jobs via occupier supply chain and employee expenditure, directly boosting the local and regional economy. In total the Eco-Park has the potential to deliver around 4,000 jobs for the County.
- 6.5 Furthermore, the proposed development will help to contribute against the 'key issues' that have been identified in the District; namely, out commuting, lack of high-quality premises, the need to attract more knowledge-based industries. The proposal will also help deliver the priorities identified by the District and LEP: for the promotion of green businesses and the development of the 'Growth Zone'. Importantly, it will also assist the LEP in its aspirations for Gloucestershire to be the greenest place to live and work in England.
- 6.6 Overall, the Green Technology Cluster provides the opportunity for Stroud District Council to meet an identified need for employment space, whilst assisting in overcoming some of the key challenges and issues identified within the District.